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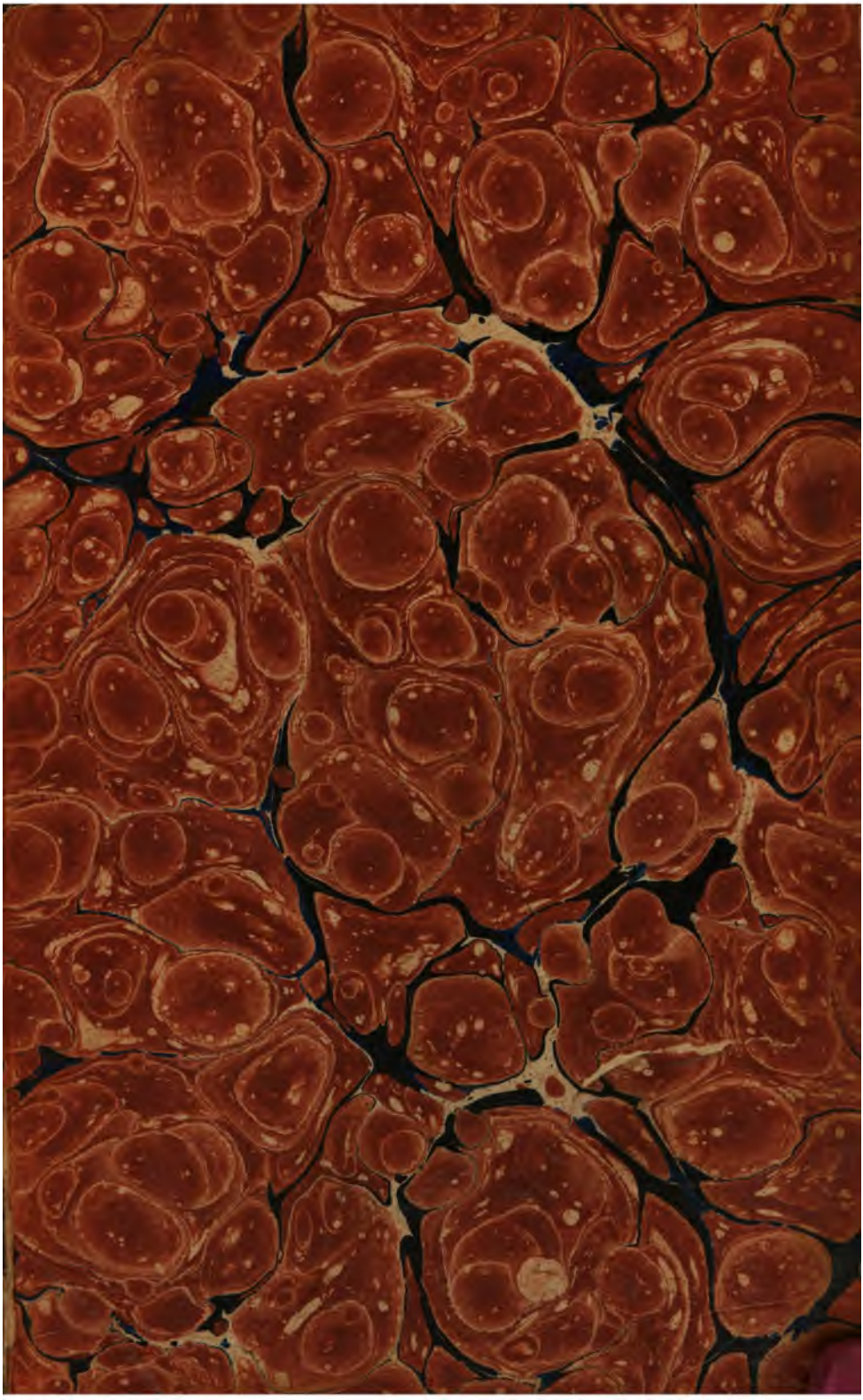

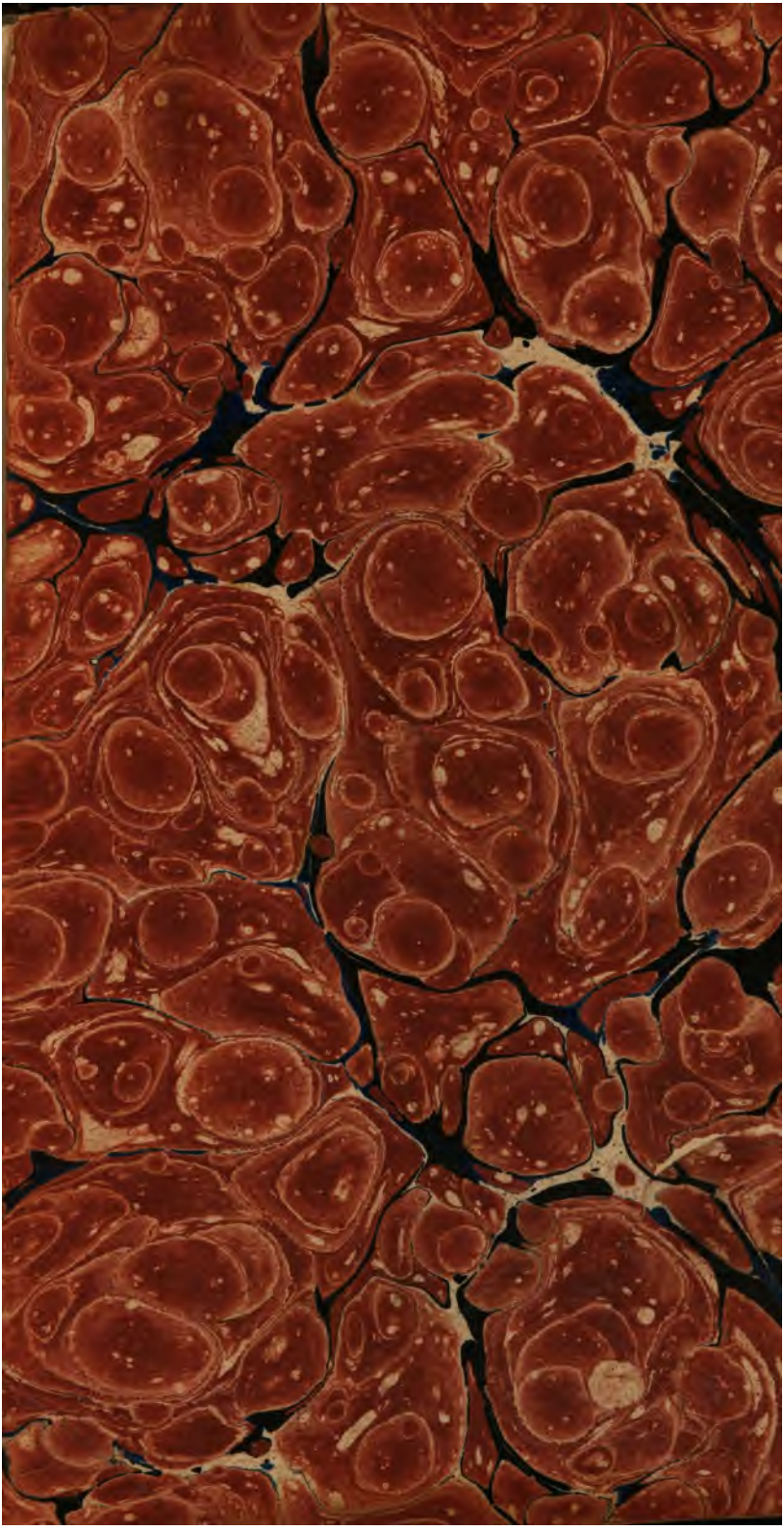

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THE

WORKS

OF

ROBT. LEIGHTON, D.D.

SOMETIME

BISHOP OF DUNBLANE,

AFTERWARDS

ARCHBISHOP OF GLASGOW.

A new and enlarged Edition:

TOGETHER WITH THE

LIFE OF THE AUTHOR,

BY THE

REV. G. JERMENT.

VOL. V.

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1808.

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THE LIFE

OF

BISHOP LEIGHTON,

IN A NEW FORM;

WITH

A DELINEATION OF HIS CHARACTER, AND A CRITICAL REVIEW OF HIS WORKS,

BY THE

REV. GEORGE JERMENT.

LIFE

OF

BISHOP LEIGHTON.

Patris perdigni filius non degener.

THERE is no species of history more instructive and more pleasing than Biography, when it is faithfully and correctly composed. The *lives* of individuals, whether they have been distinguished by rank, by talent, by official situation; or their course been marked with deep and various incidents, are always perused with eagerness. Curiosity is gratified, and we may be much instructed, by the account both of bad men, and of good. The former are beacons set up for warning, though the memorial of the great majority has deservedly perished. The latter are way-marks for leading us in the right path, and show practically how we should walk in it. If they lived in difficult and trying times; if they discovered solicitude for the welfare of the church, and of the world; if they

were eminent for learning, for piety and christian tempers, for holy zeal, and scriptural candour,—greater interest is excited, and more instruction may be expected. The memory of the wise and good, especially of those who served God in the gospel of his Son, is blessed; should be preserved, and be exhibited for the improvement of the living. When the progenitors of such men have also been honourably distinguished by their faith and patience, their courage and usefulness, we feel ourselves uncommonly interested in their history. The sacred scriptures, which abound in biography, delineate characters of this kind, often in bold and rapid sketches, sometimes in minute and accurate detail. It will be difficult to find, in any age, a father more patient, and a son more pious, than Dr. Alexander Leighton, and his son ROBERT, whose life we now propose to exhibit in a new form.

Dr. Alexander Leighton, our author's father, was a Scots minister, and was settled in London, in the reign of Charles the First; about the time when archbishop Laud, that superstitious and cruel persecutor, had nearly attained the height of his power. Dr. Leighton gave plain and faithful testimony from the pulpit and the press, against the violent measures of

the court, which were prompted chiefly by the queen, a bigotted papist; and against the conduct and character of the bishops under the influence of Laud. One book especially provoked the resentment of the court and clergy. It was entitled, "Sion's Plea against Prelacy," and the writer's spirit being stirred within him, and being naturally of a warm temper, he had used great freedom of speech, and thrown out expressions rather too severe, and somewhat acrimonious. The Dr. was apprehended, February, 1630, by a warrant from the *High Commission*, an odious and oppressive court, which took cognizance of alledged heresy; and without the form of trial was committed to Newgate. There he was clapt in irons, thrust into a dungeon, without a bed or fire; and repeated attempts were made to poison him. He languished in that situation for many weeks, and was brought to the very gates of death; partly by close confinement in such a place, partly by poisonous food secretly administered, but which the strength of his constitution overcame. While Dr. Leighton was yet dangerously ill, he was cited before the *Star Chamber*, another unjust and merciless tribunal which professed to punish sedition; and, after a mock trial received a sentence suitable to the spirit of that court, and the temper of the times.

The court adjudged, that he should pay a fine of ten thousand pounds; be deprived of the ministerial office; be set on the pillory twice, once in Westminster, and again in Cheapside; be publicly whipped; have his ears cut off, and both nostrils slit; be branded on the cheek with the letters, S. S. "A Sower of Sedition;" and finally, that he should be committed to the Fleet prison for life. While the court was pronouncing this barbarous sentence, Bishop Laud pulled off his cap with a malicious smile, and at the close gave God thanks; so hardened was his heart against the common feelings of humanity.

In hopes of Dr. Leighton's submission the execution of the sentence was delayed for several months. But, he chose rather to suffer pain and ignominy, than to act inconsistently with truth and a good conscience. The horrid sentence was executed, November, 1630, most rigorously and with punctuality, in the midst of frost and snow. As, according to the terms of the sentence, he was to be publicly exposed and punished twice, the second part of it, after the short interval of seven days, the innocent sufferer's back and face being yet excoriated and disfigured, was inflicted with unrelenting severity. Many of the spectators, and

even some of his enemies, were touched with compassion; for, besides the shocking spectacle of such cruel sufferings, the Doctor was then in the vigour of life, and though of low stature, had a fair complexion and engaging countenance; and above all, was eminent by his office, his learning, and his piety. He lay in prison more than ten years; and every day during that long period was to him a day of trial, but likewise of heavenly support and consolation.

This martyr, for such he was in spirit and in sufferings, presented a petition for release to the Long Parliament, so affecting that the house was dissolved in tears, and so reasonable that they unanimously agreed to set him at liberty. His close and tedious confinement, however, had destroyed his health, and gradually brought him to the grave. Yet, he was never heard to speak of his persecutors but in terms of compassion and forgiveness.

Dr. Alexander Leighton had three children, who attained maturity; two sons, and a daughter. Robert, the subject of this memoir, was the eldest son; and was born at London, in the year 1613. After being instructed in the

common parts of education, and initiated into the higher branches, he was sent to the University of Edinburgh. He was pious from his youth; early indicated considerable talents, as well as a strong desire to serve God in the sacred ministry; and his studies were directed with that important view. He soon commanded the admiration of his fellow students by his quick progress in the mathematics and philosophy, and by his familiar acquaintance with the learned languages; while he gained their esteem by the gentleness of his temper, and the prudence of his conduct. Never was the wisdom of the serpent more happily blended with the simplicity of the dove, and the innocence of the lamb.

Young Leighton being about seventeen years of age at the time of his father's undergoing the cruel sentence of the *Star Chamber*, it is likely that he was then in Scotland; nor does he appear to have been in England during any part of the period when his father was imprisoned. Having finished his academical course with great success and applause, he was sent abroad, and lived several years in France; particularly at *Doway*, where some of his relations resided. Being an excellent Latin scholar, he

soon acquired the French language, and could speak it almost with the fluency and accent of a native.

Our author early imbibed a strong aversion to prelacy, and to the tyranny which the leaders in the Church of England practised; aversion doubtless greatly heightened by the sufferings of his father; who, as we have seen, was a conscientious, zealous, and persecuted puritan. The son, accordingly, on his return to Britain, attached himself to the Church of Scotland, which was strictly formed on the Presbyterian model; and having been unanimously called by the congregation of Newbottle, near Edinburgh, and passing through the usual course of trial for the ministry to the great satisfaction of his judges, he was ordained there, about the 30th year of his age.

No particular account is preserved of his early life, of the time or manner of his conversion, of his habits and mode of study; and various other things, which might both gratify curiosity, and furnish profitable instruction. This is the less to be wondered at, when we consider the public confusions which then prevailed; and the less to be regretted, that few incidents in the life of our Saviour are specified

till he entered on his public ministry. We only learn the grand outlines, that he encreased in wisdom and knowledge, in favour with God and man; that he frequented the temple, and was subject to his parents. Fond of retirement, devoted to study, naturally reserved, Leighton, it is probable was scarcely known, except by name, and among chosen friends, till Providence called him to be a minister of the New Testament. His uncommon capacity, however, his extensive attainments in classical and theological knowledge, and his piety, are evident from the high approbation of those ministers who tried his talents and his godliness.

Our author remained at Newbottle several years; and proved himself to be a workman who needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth. He was most assiduous in discharging the various duties of his office. His preparation for the pulpit was very exact. He diligently visited the poor, the sick, and the afflicted, of his flock; and promoted personal, domestic, social, and public religion, to the utmost of his power, by precept, example, and many prayers. This faithful minister of Christ lived in a plain and retired manner; had an utter aversion to mixed company; was ex-

tremely cautious in the choice of his friends; and was never happier than when engaged in the duties of his office, or in his closet, storing his capacious mind with sacred knowledge, communing with his own heart, and praying to his God.

The mind of our author was not fitted for bustle and strife. Partly from timidity and modesty, partly from inclination for peace perhaps excessive, he seldom attended meetings of the presbytery, or of ministers and elders from neighbouring congregations. He was, however, occasionally present; and it being the custom for the presbytery to inquire of the several brethren, twice a year, "Whether they preached to the times?" Leighton when thus interrogated, acknowledged his omission, and apologised for it, saying, "If all the brethren have preached to the *times*, may not one poor brother be suffered to preach on *eternity?*" An answer which discovered fervent piety, rather than scriptural zeal; as the iniquities, the duties, and the signs of the times, should be faithfully proclaimed by every watchman on the walls of spiritual Jerusalem. If the brethren went to one extreme in dwelling too much on public topics; Leighton verged towards the other, in scarcely touching them. But those

times were such, that it was difficult, and almost impracticable, to observe the due medium. They were critical and perilous in an eminent degree. To enter into a minute detail of the state of parties at that time, would produce a long and unprofitable digression. Yet, a brief sketch is necessary to point out the difficulties which our author had to encounter; and to explain, in some degree, the circumstances which led to his change of religious connexion. For this purpose, we must go a little back in the history, particularly the Ecclesiastical history, of our country.

After the gradual abolition of Popery in Scotland, and the introduction of Presbytery, chiefly through means of the intrepid reformer, John Knox, in the year 1561, when the model of that reformed church was first settled, several attempts had been made to revive Popery; and when these failed, to introduce Episcopacy there, so obnoxious to the people of that country, and especially in that age. During the reigns of the unhappy Mary, and of her effeminate son, James the First, of England, the struggle between the opposite parties was constant, and carried on with various success; though, upon the whole the Protestants and Presbyterians preserved the ascendency in re-

spect of numbers and character, if not always in point of authority and influence. The pedantic and unstable monarch, whom we have just mentioned; and who, in the beginning of his reign, had by solemn oath established Presbytery in Scotland, afterwards endeavoured to establish Episcopacy in the same kingdom; apparently altered his design, and again professed a singular regard for the Presbyterian establishment; and, having ascended the throne of Britain, was so unmindful of his sacred engagements, and so ungrateful to those who were the instruments of preserving his infant-life, and of securing for him the Scottish crown, that he established Episcopacy, and excited cruel persecution, in that part of his dominions.

His son, Charles the First, equally zealous for prelacy, and who was influenced by worthless ministers, and a Popish queen, threw the whole kingdom into a ferment, and at length brought himself to the scaffold. Quarrelling with his Parliament he tried to govern without them; and the two parties came to an open rupture. Charles endeavoured to perfect the absurd scheme, which his father had formed, but had not been able to accomplish, of establishing episcopacy effectually among the Scots, contrary to the sentiments of the greater part of

them, and to the acts of their free ecclesiastical assemblies. By his own authority, he imposed on that people the English Liturgy; an imposition which they almost universally resisted. The General Assembly met soon after at Glasgow, in the year 1638, and formally abolished Episcopacy; and their sentence was approved and confirmed by Parliament. The ill-advised and obstinate monarch, who was an enemy to the religious and civil rights of his subjects, attempted to enforce his favourite scheme by the power of the sword, and levied an army to crush supposed rebellion; but, in fact, to support lawless prerogative. Twice from selfish motives he consented to a peace, thinking that he would engage the Scots to assist him against the English Parliament and army. After several battles with the Parliamentary forces, Charles went over to the Scots army at Newark; who, while they treated him with becoming respect, put a guard upon him, and, in reality, made him a prisoner. At length, they delivered him up to the Commissioners of the Parliament, who conducted him to Holmby-house, where he was closely confined. During the confinement of the king, the Duke of Hamilton, by his interest and intrigues, prevailed with the Convention of Estates to raise an army, and appoint himself General of it, in or-

der to rescue Charles from his captivity. *The Engagement*, as it was called, had a specious appearance and deceived many, who sympathized with the captive monarch, and were averse from carrying matters to the last extremity; and the rather, that they saw the rising predominance of a republican and levelling spirit.

At this critical and alarming juncture, Leighton, disgusted with animosity, unable, perhaps, to ascertain the point where resistance to the authority of a prince becomes lawful and necessary, and probably dreading the downfal of monarchy, declared for the engagement. This was the first step towards leaving his old connexions; and there were several circumstances which seem, in a particular manner, to have biassed his mind. Those of his parishioners who desired the king's liberty, and took an active part for procuring it, were in general men of bad morals. Their minister reproved them publickly for their wickedness, and thus incurred their displeasure and resentment. His simple declaration for the Engagement offended the rest; so that he was placed between two fires. The more moderate of the Episcopal party, and of respectable character, commenced a flattering correspondence with him, and endeavour-

sor. The lectures were usually given in the Latin tongue, which was cultivated in that age with extraordinary diligence and success. Dr. Leighton addressed himself to the duties of his new office with zeal and ability. His Theological Lectures are known to the learned world, and have been translated into English. For pure Latin, sublime thought, and warm diction, they have never been surpassed, and seldom equalled. Many who were not students crowded to hear them; and the Principal, not discomposed by the appearance of strangers, continued to prelect with a modest dignity, and a peculiar sweetness, which charmed all his auditors. In that office Dr. Leighton remained ten years; the ornament and delight of the University, and a blessing to studious youth.

After the death of Charles, Dr. Leighton, during the vacation, which lasted about six months in the year, sometimes came to London. But, his calm, humble mind, was greatly hurt by the turbulent and ostentatious spirit of not a few of the Republicans; many of whom, though really pious, used extravagant expressions; genuine godliness being then, doubtless, often blended with no small degree of enthusiasm. Politics and a party-spirit ran high; and the effervescence of the public mind had not yet

cooled. Their form of church-government was diametrically opposite to that which the Doctor had materially embraced; and extremely different from that in which he had been educated, and which he first professed. The character of Cromwell himself, who, with consummate talents for commanding in the army, and ruling in the state, practised deep dissimulation, and occasionally made religion subservient to his political and selfish ends, must have impressed our author's mind very unfavourably. The Scots, too, who had always protested against the execution of the king, and approved of a limited monarchy, proclaimed Charles the Second to be their lawful sovereign, determined to support him by force of arms; and many of them considered Cromwell as combining the odious characters of usurper, tyrant, and hypocrite. It is no wonder, then, that the Doctor returned from London with sentiments of disgust; and revolting at the idea of independency approached nearer, as Presbyterians think, to the opposite extreme.

He made several excursions, likewise, to Flanders; partly for his health, which was always delicate: but chiefly to observe on the spot the different orders and the manners of the Romish clergy. Finding some Jansenists there,

who were men both of knowledge and piety, and as to the great doctrinal points of scripture, sound in the faith, he esteemed them highly; and on his return from his first visit to that country commenced a correspondence with them by letter. He had long carried on an epistolary correspondence with some of his relations at *Doway*, who were in Popish orders. These things excited a suspicion of his leaning towards Popery; a suspicion often attached in that age to all who favoured Episcopacy. But nothing, as appears from the whole tenor of his works, and the general course of his life, was more abhorrent to his soul. One of his cotemporaries, and an intimate companion, Bishop Burnet, expressly affirms, that our author frequently spoke against the Popish system with a keenness foreign to the natural placidity and moderation of his temper; and that he was in the habit of applying to it the strong characters in holy writ of the wisdom from beneath, "earthly, sensual, devilish." Christianity taught, and grace disposed him, to love relations, whatever their religious principles were; and to esteem wise and godly individuals of the Romish church, while he cordially protested against their profession.

We now come to a period in Dr. Leighton's life, which it is confessedly difficult to re-

concile with his general character for wisdom and caution. His acceptance of a bishoprick, especially in such times of trouble, though he had been a Presbyterian minister, and had resolved to retire from every public situation in the church, was unexpected, and to many an offensive step. The circumstances which led to it may be briefly mentioned. Charles the IId. who had sworn to maintain the Presbyterian form of Church Government in Scotland, and even in England, gave strong grounds, at the very time, to suspect his sincerity; and soon manifested, that promises and oaths were no obstacle in the way of any favourite scheme, for stretching his authority in the state and in the church. A papist in principle, a profligate in practice, he professed first to be a Presbyterian, and then to be an Episcopalian; while the establishment of Popery, so congenial to arbitrary power, was the ultimate object of his wishes and designs. Not long after the restoration, Charles threw off the mask, and discovered an inflexible purpose to establish Episcopacy in Scotland; where it was particularly odious, had never flourished, and been planted with violence and blood. Having asked advice, on the subject, of the Privy Council there, the majority of the members, either shamefully ignorant of the views and tempers of the people, or rather

wishing to flatter the king, gave it as their opinion, that the design would be generally acceptable, or meet with little resistance. The attempt, however, was generally disapproved, and violently opposed. But the king, misled and obstinate, determined to carry his point; and involved that kingdom in the horrors of popular tumult, general disaffection, and civil war.

Dr. Leighton, whose views of Episcopacy itself were extremely moderate, and who had no idea that the establishment of it in Scotland would produce such fatal effects, went to Bath for his health. He courted no preferment, and seems to have indulged no wish for any dignity in the church. Being invited to London, or going thither to visit his brother and friends, the acceptance of a see in Scotland was urged upon him both by the court and his own connexions. His character for learning, piety, moderation, and candour, it was thought, would greatly promote the new scheme. It is probable, likewise, that the hope of accommodating differences between the opposite parties, or, at least, of softening their mutual animosity, induced the Doctor to be overcome by repeated solicitations. One circumstance, scarcely noticed by his Biographers, appears to have had

no small weight in determining his mind. His brother, Sir Elisha, who was a courtier, and ambitious of preferment, gained his confidence by strong professions of piety, and expected to oblige the king by procuring the Doctor's acquiescence, and to rise at court through his advancement. Dr. Leighton's guiltless heart and recluse habits fitted him to be the dupe of designing men.

Several things, however, show that he did not enter cordially into the plan, and was even partly averse to it. He chose the most obscure and least lucrative see, the Diocese of Dunblane; disapproved of the feasting at the time of consecration, and testified plainly against it; objected to the title of *Lord*; refused to accompany the other Scots Bishops in their pompous entry into Edinburgh; hastened to Dunblane; did not accept of the invitation to Parliament, and almost the only time he took his seat there, was for the purpose of urging lenity towards Presbyterians; detested all violent measures; persecuted no man, upbraided no man; had little correspondence with his brethren, and incurred their deep resentment by his reserve and strictness; acknowledged that Providence frowned both on the scheme and the instruments; and confined himself to his Diocese.'

It was in April, 1662, that Bishop Leighton entered the seat of his Diocese, and there he laboured most assiduously; preached every Lord's day, consoled the sick and afflicted, instructed the ignorant, and gave liberally to the poor. When any of the churches were vacant, he frequently supplied them himself; and visited all of them once a year. The majority of his clergy were both illiterate and careless; but, his timidity, and hope of their amendment by his own instruction and example, prevented him from deposing them; a sentence which he would have found it difficult to execute, against the influence of their friends, and the temper of the other bishops. His deep concern that they might be wise and good is evident from various charges which he gave them; and particularly from the first, delivered September 1662, which has been published, and breathes a spirit of piety and peace. Among other excellent directions in that charge, the Bishop urges the necessity of personal holiness and of peaceable tempers. He said, "that it was to be remembered both by them and himself, to what eminent degrees of purity of heart and life, their holy calling doth engage them; to how great contempt of this present world, and inflamed affections toward heaven, springing from deep persuasion within them of those things they

preach to others, and from the daily meditation on them, and fervent prayer: and that we consider how ill it becomes us to be much in the trivial conversation of the world; but, when our duty or necessity leads us into company, that our speech and deportment be exemplarily holy; and that we be meek and gentle, endeavouring rather to quench than to increase the useless debates and contentions that abound in the world: and be always more studious of pacific than polemic divinity; the students of the former are called the sons of *God*."

This address, though given with the greatest sincerity, has the air of a severe satire on the measures of the government and behaviour of the clergy. Persecution raged in the southern and western parts of Scotland; and the country was oppressed and deluged with blood to plant a form of Christianity. But, not one individual within the diocese of Dunblane, during Leighton's occupation of that see, was violently molested for his religious principles; an exception which must be ascribed, in a great degree, to the mild temper and active influence of the Bishop. To the Presbyterian ministers, particularly in his own Diocese, he was always lenient; held several conferences with them for the purpose of accom-

modation, and occasionally heard them preach; an instance of liberality which even in our days of boasted candour never occurs. Every other part of Scotland where Episcopacy was established, exhibited scenes from which the eye turns with grief and horror. Here, we may anticipate the remark, that on the same principles of liberty which the Puritans and Nonconformists in England, and the Presbyterians and Covenanters in Scotland cherished, and for which many of them bled, the glorious revolution was afterwards effected. To the labours, sufferings, and martyrdom of these worthy men we are indebted, under Providence, for our most valuable privileges.

The cruelties and murders committed in many places of Scotland, under colour of law, and the mask of zeal, sat heavy on Leighton's mind; and he wept in secret places for the state of the church and the calamities of his country: nor in the hours of solitude and reflection could he entirely free himself from blame. His conscience, well-informed and tender, smote him for drawing with such men, and seeming to participate in such measures. The fact is, that unawares he was carried into a vortex, where he endured the collision of conflicting waters, and perpetually endeavoured to

make his escape. The honest, unsuspecting mind of Leighton perceived not his error till it was too late. Scarcely three months elapsed from the time of his becoming a Bishop, when two thousand of the most learned, the wisest, and holiest ministers which England ever saw, were violently cast out of their churches, for non-conformity. The sentence of ejection, known by the name of the Bartholemew-act, was passed in August, 1662: and before the end of the same year four hundred ministers were silenced in Scotland for the same cause. Fines, imprisonment, exile, and death, were the means employed by the civil and ecclesiastical rulers of that day to promote uniformity in religious profession and worship. A minute account of the sufferings of the conscientious, especially of faithful ministers, in South Britain, and in the North, would fill many volumes. How were their places, particularly in Scotland, supplied? Burnet, who may be supposed to have drawn the character of the new incumbents in true colours, thus describes them; that they were the worst preachers *he* ever heard; were ignorant to a reproach, and many of them openly vicious; that they were a disgrace to the sacred function, and were indeed the refuse of the northern parts; and that those of them who rose above contempt or scandal were men

of such violent tempers, that they were as much hated as the others were despised.

Leighton spake, wrote, and remonstrated against this miserable state of things; and his righteous, merciful soul was vexed from day to day, when he saw church-men and soldiers, headed by Sharp and Lauderdale, over-running the country like locusts. In the month of October, 1665, only three years and a half after his settlement at Dunblane, the Dr. plainly, and in public, intimated to his clergy his design of retiring from office; assigned as a reason that he was weary of contentions; and closed with these words, "Finally, brethren, farewell; be perfect, be of good comfort, be of one mind, live in peace; and the God of love and peace shall be with you." He was induced, however, to remain a little longer, in hope that a proper representation of the state of matters to the king, which Leighton, notwithstanding his natural diffidence, undertook to make personally, would relieve his oppressed country. Accordingly, he went to London, and being introduced to Charles, was received with great condescension; for Charles, though of the most abandoned morals, had the polish of a gentleman; and, when conversing with the clergy, could at times assume a grave

and imposing aspect. Leighton detailed to the King the violent and cruel proceedings in Scotland, protested against any concurrence in such measures, declared that being a bishop he was in some degree accessary to the rigorous deeds of others in supporting Episcopacy, and requested permission to resign his bishoprick. The king heard him with attention, and with apparent sorrow for the state of Scotland; assured him that lenient measures should be adopted; but positively refused to accept his resignation.—Charles and the court were convinced that Leighton was almost the only Scots bishop who possessed either talents or good tempers, and they felt the necessity of urging his continuance in office. His own brother, too, still cajoled him to retain the see, and promised to use his influence for putting a stop to the grievous severities. The king, indeed, before Leighton left London, professed to have sent orders of that kind, and to have even annulled the ecclesiastical commission. But, this was merely a pretext to please Leighton for the time, and to deceive him as to the real intentions of the court. The good Bishop, who had expressly affirmed to Charles that he would not plant christianity itself by violence, and far less a particular mode of government and worship, left London full of hopes that the king

and his ministers had been convinced of their error, and were determined to correct it. These hopes, however, were speedily blasted. Oppression became every day more grievous. Civil war was excited, and those who were the best friends to the constitution and their country were treated as enemies and rebels. Leighton attended to the duties of his office without intermeddling at all in the deeds of the violent and bloody men; and seldom stirred beyond the limits of his diocese.—He gave himself to reading, meditation, and prayer; and lived in the plainest and most sequestered style.

In the year 1667, Leighton was again forced from his beloved retirement to plead the cause of an oppressed and injured people. He went to London a second time, and remonstrated earnestly with the king against the oppressive measures still pursued. He had two audiences of Charles, and represented in strong but respectful language, the injustice and cruelty with which affairs were administered in Scotland. It was then that the good bishop took the liberty of proposing to the king, and even urging, that the Presbyterians should be treated with moderation and lenity. Charles, as usual, gave him fair speeches and promises; but nothing effectual was done. Leighton returned to his

diocese with a heavy heart, and laboured in word and doctrine; preaching and catechising throughout his diocese. Thus, he continued at Dunblane for almost eight years, a burning and a shining light, in the midst of discord and contention, violence and war all around. Meanwhile, his peaceful endeavours to soften the opposite parties were unremitting, but without success.

In the year 1670, our author, without his solicitation, and against his will, was appointed to the archbishoprick of Glasgow; though he did not take possession of that see for twelve months after the appointment. He was strongly urged by the ruling men to accept of that bishoprick, yet hesitated long. They knew that he was the only man qualified to allay the discontents which prevailed in the West of Scotland; and even the king ordered him up to court, for the purpose of overcoming his scruples. Knowing that Leighton had formed a scheme of accommodation between the Episcopalians and Presbyterians, which was for years the object of his desires and the subject of his study, Charles examined it, expressed his approbation, and promised assistance in carrying it into effect. This was the motive which induced our author to accept of the archbishoprick of Glasgow. The

scheme itself was marked with moderation. Leighton wished each of the parties, for the sake of peace, to abate somewhat of their opinions respectively, as to the mode of government and worship: nor did he conceive that truth would suffer by their union, but rather that the great ends of christianity would be promoted. Being the reverse of a high churchman on the one hand, and of a bigotted Presbyterian on the other, his plan was, to reduce the power of the bishops considerably, and to retain very few of the Episcopalian ceremonies. He proposed, that the bishop should be only perpetual moderator, have no negative vote, and that every question should be determined by the majority of Presbyters. But various things rendered the scheme abortive. Both parties were too much exasperated, and too jealous of each other, to yield a single point. The other Bishops refused to co-operate with Leighton in this labour of love, disapproved of the plan, and hated him for proposing it. The Presbyterians saw the essence, or at least the germ, of Episcopacy, in the official superiority of one minister; and neither perfect parity of members, nor a regular subordination of courts. There is sufficient ground, likewise, to think that the king sent secret instructions to counteract the whole of Leighton's plan. In

short, though the scheme did much honour to his liberal and pacific heart, it came to nothing. Our author, however, while he was Archbishop of Glasgow, did all in his power to reform the clergy, to correct wickedness and promote piety among the people, to suppress violence, and to soothe the minds of the Presbyterians. At Glasgow, Paisley, and Edinburgh, he even held conferences with them on their principles, and on his scheme of accommodation, but without effect. The parties could not be brought to mutual indulgence, and far less to religious concord. Bishop Burnet, by the by, unjustly blames and grossly calumniates the Presbyterians for rejecting the concessions offered. They supposed the New Testament Scriptures to sanction and require a perfect equality in official power, among the ministers of Christ. The experience of Episcopacy during the two preceding reigns was calculated to create disgust and aversion. It had been introduced, and was still continued, by military force; and was made subservient to the purposes of despotic princes. History does not furnish instances of severer acts of cruelty under any Protestant government, than were committed by the family of Stuart in Scotland to establish Prelacy. Besides, the Scots Reformers knew that Leighton was the only Bishop, and almost the only man

in church or in state, who was cordial and zealous in making the proposal. Had they acceded, and had the plan been even legally sanctioned, the King was empowered by the act of supremacy, which put the whole legislative authority into his hands, to thwart and destroy the scheme. In such circumstances, it is no wonder that the Presbyterians should stand aloof, and indulge reasonable suspicions. Whatever praise was due to Leighton, greater praise is due to them for integrity and firmness, in a cause which they believed to be the cause of God and truth.

Our author, undermined and opposed by his own party for his blameless life, and lenient principles and temper; suspected by some of the other party through his gentleness, felt his situation to be irksome and intolerable. Burdened above measure, he looked back to Dunblane with fond regret, and did not cease affectionately and solemnly to admonish the Clergy of that Diocese; as appears from the following letter to the Synod of Dunblane.

"Glasgow, April 6, 1671.

"REVEREND BRETHREN,

"The superadded burden that I have here sits so heavy upon me, that I cannot escape

from under it, to be with you at this time, but my heart and desires shall be with you, for a blessing from above upon your meeting. I have nothing to recommend to you, but (if you please) to take a review of things formerly agreed upon; and such as you judge most useful, to renew the appointment of putting them in practice; and to add whatsoever further shall occur to your thoughts, that may promote the happy discharge of your ministry, and the good of your people's souls. I know I need not remind you, for I am confident you daily think of it, that the great principle of fidelity and diligence, and good success, in that great work, is love; and the great spring of love to souls, is love to Him that bought them. He knew it well himself; and gave us to know it, when he said, *Simon, lovest thou me? Feed my sheep, feed my lambs.* Deep impression of his blessed name upon our hearts, will not fail to produce lively expression of it, not only in our words and discourses, in private and public, but will make the whole track of our lives to be a true copy and transcript of his holy life: And, if there be within us any sparks of that divine love, you know the best way, not only to preserve them, but to excite them, and blow them up into a flame, is by the breath of prayer. Oh prayer! the converse of the soul with God, the breath

of God in man returning to its original, frequent, and fervent prayer, the better half of our whole work, and that which makes the other half lively and effectual; as that holy company tells us, when appointing deacons to serve the tables, they add, *But we will give ourselves continually to prayer, and the ministry of the word.* And is it not, brethren, our unspeakable advantage, beyond all the gainful and honourable employments of the world, that the whole work of our particular calling is a kind of living in heaven, and besides its tendency to the saving of the souls of others, is all along so proper and adapted to the purifying and saving of our own? But you will possibly say, what does he himself that speaks these things unto us? Alas! I am ashamed to tell you. All I dare say is this, I think I see the beauty of holiness, and am enamoured with it, though I attain it not; and how little soever I attain, would rather live and die in the pursuit of it, than in the pursuit, yea, or in the possession and enjoyment, though unpursued, of all the advantages that this world affords. And I trust, dear Brethren, you are of the same opinion, and have the same desire and design, and follow it both more diligently, and with better success. But I will stop here, lest I should forget myself, and possibly run on till I have wearied you, if I have not done that

already; and yet if it be so, I will hope for easy pardon at your hands, as of a fault I have not been accustomed to heretofore, nor am likely hereafter often to commit. To the all-powerful grace of our great Lord and Master, I recommend you, and your flocks, and your whole work amongst them; and do earnestly entreat your prayers for.

Your unworthiest, but most affectionate,
Brother and Servant,
R. LEIGHTON.

Though some of the Clergy in the diocese of Dunblane, were bad men, the majority of them were superior both in knowledge and morals to the clergy in the West of Scotland. All the attempts of Leighton to reform *them* were ineffectual. The troubles of the country increased; the anxieties and sorrows of our author increased in the same proportion.—Finding his new situation more and more disagreeable, and seeing no hope of uniting the different parties, he again determined to resign his dignity; and went to London for that purpose, in the summer of 1673. The king, however, still refused to accept his resignation; but gave a written engagement to allow him to retire, after the trial of another year. The following is a Copy of the King's engagement.

"CHARLES R.

"IT is our will and pleasure, that the present Archbishop of Glasgow do continue in that station for one whole year; and we shall allow liberty to him to retire from thence, at the end of that time.

"Given at our Court, at Whitehall, the Ninth day of August, 1673; and of our Reign, the Twenty-fifth Year. By his Majesty's command."

On this assurance, Bishop Leighton returned to Glasgow, fulfilled the period of the engagement, and a long year it was to him.—He often said, that there was now only one painful stage between him and rest. His determination to resign was now firmly fixed, and whenever the period elapsed, he went to London, and resigned his charge. The resignation was, according to promise, accepted, to the relief and joy of his heart.

We have already mentioned, that Bishop Leighton had one sister. She was married to a gentleman of fortune and character, Edward Lightmaker, Esq. of Broadhurst, in Sussex. Mrs. Lightmaker was now a widow, and lived with her son, in the family mansion. Thither

Leighton was invited to retire, and spend the remainder of his days. 'His sister's spirit was congenial to his own; and young Lightmaker was a most dutiful son, and respectful nephew. Our author saw a retreat from care and trouble provided for him by a kind Providence, and entered it with a grateful and disburthened soul. There he lived in great privacy; and divided his time between study, devotion, and benevolence. In the parish of Broadhurst, and in the neighbouring parishes, he preached frequently; and his labours were eminently blessed. He received no company, excepting two or three select friends; and scarcely ever visited any but the poor, and the sick. He enquired little after public affairs, and seemed to be almost entirely dead to the world. Epistolary correspondence with a few companions, which turned chiefly on experimental and practical religion, was one of his principal delights. After spending five years in this manner, without any remarkable interruption of his solitude, his fears were much alarmed by an unexpected and private letter from the King's own hand. It was written, as follows;

"My Lord,

Windsor, *July* 16, 1679.

"I am resolved to try what clemency can prevail upon such in Scotland, as will not con-

form to the government of the church there; for effecting of which design, I desire that you may go down to Scotland with your first conveniency; and take all possible pains for persuading all you can of both opinions to as much mutual correspondence and concord as can be: and send me from time to time characters both of men and things. In order to this design, I shall send a precept for two hundred pounds sterling upon my Exchequer, till you resolve how to serve me in a stated employment,

Your loving Friend,

Charles R."

Addressed thus,

"For the Bishop of Dunblane."

It would appear from this address, that Leighton, after resigning the dignity of Archbishop of Glasgow, resumed that of Bishop of Dunblane.—Or perhaps he simply retained the title, without the office. The matter referred to in the above letter being managed secretly between the king and Leighton, we know not how he got himself excused from complying with the royal order. But certain it is, that he never again visited Scotland, nor intermeddled with ecclesiastical affairs. He continued in his beloved retirement about ten years, edifying

all around him by occasional advice and constant example, and waiting for the time of his departure. Knowing that it could not be distant, he settled his worldly affairs, and made his will; which was written with his own hand, and discovers piety, charity, and modesty.—The following copy may be gratifying to the reader.

At Broadhurst, *Feb.* 17, 1683.

"Being at present (thanks be to God) in my accustomed health of body and soundness of mind and memory, I do write this with my own hand, to signify, that when the day I so much wished and longed for is come, that shall set me free of this prison of clay wherein I am lodged, what I leave behind me of money, goods, or chattels, or whatsoever of any kind was called mine; I do devote to charitable uses, partly such as I have recommended, particularly to my sister Mrs. Sapphira Lightmaker and her son Master Edward Lightmaker of Broadhurst, and the remainder to such other charities as their own discretion shall think fittest. Only I desire each of them to accept of a small token of a little grateful acknowledgement of their great kindness, and the trouble they have had with me for some years that I was their guest, the proportion whereof (to remove their scruple of taking it) I did expressly name to them-

selves while I was with them before the writing hereof, and likewise after I have wrote it. But they need not give any account of it to any other, the whole being left to their disposal. Neither I hope will any other friends or relations of mine take it unkind that I bequeath no legacy to any of them, designing as is said, so entirely to charity the whole remains. Only my books I leave and bequeath to the Cathedral of Dunblane in Scotland, to remain there for the use of the clergy of that Diocese. I think I need no more, but that I appoint my said sister, Mrs. Sapphira Lightmaker, of Broadhurst, and her son Mr. Edward Lightmaker of Broadhurst, joint executors of this my will,—if they be both living at my decease as I hope they shall, or if that one of them shall be surviving, that one is to be sole executor of it. I hope none will raise any question or doubt about this upon any omission or informality of expression in it. Being for prevention thereof as plainly expressed as it could be conceived by me. And this I declare to be the last will and testament of,

ROBERT LEIGHTON."

"Signed, sealed, and published, in presence of John Pelling, and George Warner."

Having thus set his house in order, a duty which even some wise and good men are apt to neglect, our author still longed and prepared for another world. Though his constitution was never vigorous, he seems to have enjoyed a green old age. About the beginning of the year 1684, Bishop Burnet informed Leighton that some of his Scots friends had arrived in London; and had expressed a strong desire to see him, after the absence of so many years; and that they even proposed to visit him in his retirement; adding, that they wished for his advice and assistance in a matter highly important. The good bishop, whose heart was ever alive to the feelings of friendship, rejoiced at the news; but could not think of putting his friends to the inconvenience of going to Broadhurst on his account. He therefore went to London; and had several pleasant interviews with them. While he was in town, proposals were made to him, particularly by his friends from Scotland, who were persons of rank and influence, that he should return to that country, and again fill a public station in the church. But, Leighton absolutely declined the proposal, and told them, that his work and his journey were now almost finished.

Whether he had any presentiment of his ap-

proaching change does not appear; but in the course of a few days, he was seized with a pleurisy. He was confined to his room about a week, and to bed only three days. Bishop Burnet, and other friends, attended him constantly during his last illness; and had the consolation to witness the tranquillity of his mind, and the triumph of his faith. He spoke of death not with composure only, but with joy and rapture. His end, like his temper, was peaceful; without violent pain, or convulsive struggle, he breathed his last, on the first day of February, 1684, in the 71st year of his age.

Unhappily none of his particular sayings on his death-bed are preserved. But, he died daily, and daily spake as a dying man. The very nature of the disorder prevented much speaking; and such removals, while they are often congenial to the character of the individual, teach us to adore divine sovereignty, and to "cease from man."

By his express desire, the earthly remains of this saint were conveyed to Broadhurst, to the burial-place of his brother-in-law, Mr. Lightmaker; and the funeral was attended by sorrowful friends, and a vast croud of mourning

spectators. The body was deposited in the church of Broadhurst; and a monument of plain marble, inscribed with his name, office, and age, was erected at the expence of his sister.

Another lady, though no relation, the ingenious Mrs. Grant, of Laggan, has done honour to his memory, and to her own talents and taste, in the following verses, written when she visited Dunblane a few years ago, and which would make an excellent epitaph. Mrs. Grant, speaking of Dunblane, says,

" Where simple piety is seen,
To flourish with unfading grace,
Since Leighton taught and blest the place
Dear, lov'd, rever'd, and honour'd name!
Whose sound awakes devotion's flame;
When musing in the lofty aisle
Of yon Cathedral's mould'ring pile;
By thy bless'd memory inspir'd,
What sacred joy my bosom fir'd;
With mild, complacent spirit, meek,
And placid brow, in act to speak;
Methought I saw his form appear,
While crouds in silent awe revere,
The Evangelic Shepherd kind,
Who feeds the hungry, leads the blind,
And gently draws the sheep that stray,
To his lov'd master's living way.
In meditation wrapt profound,
Or pouring balm in misery's wound;

I see his humble mitre bright
With purest beams of heavenly light;
Bold fancy check thy downy wing,
Nor strive midst trivial themes to sing,
Of him who far beyond our praise
With seraphs joins immortal lays!
Sweet warbling through the courts above
The raptures of celestial love."

Several remarkable circumstances accompanied the death of this great and good man. Though the bishop had courted retirement all his life long, and had enjoyed it almost without interruption at Broadhurst for ten years, he was unexpectedly brought to London to see esteemed friends once more, and to edify them by the closing scene.—Leighton, too, as himself probably thought, received a strong hint in the course of Providence a short time before his death, that he must soon depart.—As he never pressed the payment of his revenue, if it may be called by that name, considerable arrears were owing to him in Scotland. These were left in trust with a friend, who made small and slow remittances; and the very last remittance which could be expected was sent a few weeks before our author's decease. But, the most remarkable circumstance of all, was, that God granted a singular wish which Leighton often expressed. He was in the habit of expressing

a desire, with submission to the will of heaven, that he might die from home, and at an inn. He considered such a place as suitable to the character of the christian pilgrim, to whom the world is an inn, a place of accommodation by the way, not his home; and that the spiritual sojourner steps with propriety from an inn to his father's house. Leighton thought, also, that the care and concern of friends were apt to entangle and discompose the dying saint; and that the unfeeling attendance of strangers weaned the heart from the world, and smoothed the passage to heaven. Our author obtained his wish; for he died at the Bell-inn, in Warwick Lane; and none of his near relations were present during his last illness. If he had not the consolation to see his nearest relation, a beloved sister, the feelings of both were spared the agony of a final adieu.

Having mentioned these circumstances of his removal, we may briefly describe the person of this extraordinary man. Leighton was about the middle stature, well-proportioned, and of a fair complexion. There was an admirable mixture of gravity and sweetness in his countenance: his eyes beamed intelligence, sensibility, and benignity. At the sight of the portrait prefixed to this edition of his Works, one can scarcely

help exclaiming, "Quantæ pietatis imago!" "Of how much piety an image!" He had a quickness in his motions, even in old age, which indicated the activity and energy of his mind. Contrary to the fashion of the times, he wore his own hair, which was black, and in advanced life retained the original colour. Though he took little exercise, was a close student, extremely abstemious, and sometimes ailing, on the whole he enjoyed good health; and, at the advanced period of threescore years and ten, looked well.

Our author was never married. A heart like his, feeling and warm, was not surely insensible to the charms of beauty and the emotions of love. But it was his constant aim to subdue even innocent passions, and obtain the entire mastery over them. Besides, he seems partly from principle to have preferred a single life, and to have admired excessively monkish and recluse habits. The ideas of disentanglement from the cares of the world, of quietness, and of devotion, which were associated in his good mind with privacy, had to him the most attractive charms. The uncommon troubles of the times, too, might strengthen his desire and design of living single. Even in the vigour of life, and when filling the highest station in the

church, he was tired of the world, and dead to it. His dress, his food, his furniture, were of the plainest kind; and his life has been called quaintly, yet expressively, a perpetual fast.

Leighton observed the strictest economy, not from the love of hoarding, but for the most generous and noble purpose. Obtaining some property by his father, having no family, and living with great frugality, he was enabled both to give and to bequeath much for charitable uses. His salary at Dunblane, though the deanery of the Chapel Royal was annexed to that see, did not exceed £200 per annum. His revenue from Glasgow amounted to about £400. But, confining himself to the simple necessaries of life, with few of its comforts, and none of its luxuries, he acted as a good steward, and was ready to distribute. He was at once a friend to the poor, and a patron of learning; as his donations and legacies prove. Every period of his life was marked with substantial, prudent, unostentatious charity. For, Leighton was not one of those who defer giving, till they can retain no longer. He allotted every sixpence, beyond what was barely necessary for himself, to pious and benevolent uses.—This was his manner at Newbottle. When he was principal of the University of Edinburgh, the love of money

did not, as is too often the case, increase with his income. He gave, and gave liberally, as God prospered him. Our author founded in that University a bursary of philosophy, and for this purpose gave £150 sterling to the City of Edinburgh. After he had left Dunblane, and filled the see of Glasgow, Leighton sunk for the poor of Dunblane a considerable sum of money, due to him by a gentleman in that place; and which was paid, and appropriated accordingly. He sunk £300 sterling for founding three bursaries of philosophy in the University of Glasgow; and £300 more for maintaining four old men in St. Nicholas's hospital in that city. By his last will, above inserted, this truly liberal soul bequeathed the whole of his remaining property to charitable purposes,—partly specified by himself to Mrs. Lightmaker and her son, and partly left to their discretion. His large and well-chosen library and valuable manuscripts, he disponed to the see of Dunblane; with money towards erecting a house for the books, increasing their number, and paying a librarian. It should be mentioned to the honour of his executors, that they very considerably, and without solicitation, added much to that sum. Thus, in almost every place where our author had held a public office, he opened a permanent source of beneficence. He was, indeed, a father to the poor,

relieved them on many occasions, and often without discovering the benefactor. During his retirement at Broadhurst, he employed confidential friends to distribute his bounty; and sent money even to London for that purpose. In short, of Leighton it may be said with truth, and eminently, that he considered the case of the poor, and drew out his soul to the hungry. Perhaps no man ever tasted, with keener relish, the luxury of doing good to the children of want and woe. Not a few of them, we hope, relieved by his bounty, and enlightened by his instruction, hailed his arrival in the abodes of bliss*.

His was a most extensive charity, including brotherly kindness in every direction. It flowed copiously in the channel of epistolary correspondence. The pious, generous, kind, sympathizing heart of Leighton was poured out in his letters; some of which have been published, and afford a pleasing specimen of his manner and spirit. His letter to the clergy in the diocese of Dunblane, after our author left that see, we have given at full length. As, next to conversation with particular friends, epistles to such characters unfold the mind and heart, we shall insert a few extracts from some of Leighton's letters, which breathe an uncommon spirit of devotion.

* See Luke xvi. 9.

The following was written to a friend; when our Author was principal of the University of Edinburgh, and shows what kind of reading was most agreeable to this man of extensive literature.

" Meanwhile I think I have at a venture given up with the contemptible desires and designs of this present world, and must have either something beyond them all, or nothing at all; and though this βορβορῶσα ὕλη, this base clod of earth, I carry, still depresses me, I am glad that even because it does so, I loath and despise it; and would say, *Major sum et ad majora genitus, quam ut mancipium sim vilis corpusculi, i. e.* " I am greater, and born to greater things, than to be the slave of a vile body." I have sent you two little pieces of history, wherein it may be you will find small relish, but the hazard is small; and however I pray you do not send them back to me at all; for I have enow of that kind. The one is from a good pen, and an acquaintance and friend of yours, *Paulus Nolanns*, and his life of *Martin* of *Towers* I think you will relish, and I believe it is not in your *Vitæ patrum:* the other *Valerius Maximus* I conceived would cloy you the less, because it is of so much variety of selected examples, and the stages are so short you may begin and leave off where you

will, without wearying. But when all is done there is one only blessed story wherein our souls must dwell and take up their rest; for amongst all the rest we shall not read, *Venite ad me omnes lassi et laborantes, et ego vobis requiem prestabo*; "*come unto me all ye that labour*, &c." and never any yet that tried him, but found him as good as his word: to whose sweet embraces I recommend you and desire to meet you there."

That he felt as a stranger and pilgrim on the earth, even while he filled the highest seat in the university, and was panting for immortality, is evident from the following extract.

"SIR,

"Oh! what a weariness is it to live amongst men, and find so few men; and amongst christians, and find so few christians; so much talk and so little action; religion turned almost to a tune and air of words; and amidst all our pretty discourses, pusillanimous and base, and so easily dragged into the mire, self and flesh, and pride and passion domineering while we speak of being in Christ, and cloathed with him, and believe it because we speak it so often and so confidently. Well I know you are not willing to be thus gulled, and having some glances of the beauty of holiness, aim no lower than

perfection, which in end we hope to attain; and in the mean while the smallest advances towards it are more worth than crowns and sceptres. I believe it you often think on these words of the blessed champion *Paul*[a]. There is a noble guest within us. Oh! let all our business be to entertain him honourably, and to live in celestial love within, that will make all things without be very contemptible in our eyes.—I should rove on did not I stop myself, it falling out well too for that, to be hard upon the post hours ere I thought of writing. Therefore good night is all I add; for whatsoever hour it comes to your hand, I believe you are as sensible as I that it is still night, but the comfort is, it draws nigh towards that bright morning that shall make amends.

Your weary fellow Pilgrim,

R. L."

The following extract is taken from a letter which our author wrote to a minister, and which seems to have been sent when he was hesitating much about the acceptance of a bishoprick.

"One comfort I have, that in what is prest on me there is the least of my own choice; yea on the contrary, the strongest aversion

[a] 1 Cor. 9—24, &c.

that ever I had to any thing in all my life. The truth is, I am yet importuning and struggling for a liberation, and look upward for it; but whatever be the issue, I look beyond it, and this weary wretched life, through which the hand I have resigned to will, I trust, lead me in paths of his chusing, and so I may please him, I am satisfied. I hope, if ever we meet, you shall find me in the love of solitude and a devout life. Pray for me. This word I will add, that as there has been nothing of my choice in the matter, so I undergo it (if it must be) as a mortification, and that greater than a cell and hair-cloth; whether any will believe this or no, I am not careful."

The following is an extract from a letter written a few months after Bishop Leighton took possession of the see of Dunblane, and discovers an instance of true wit closely connected (ah! rare association) with fervent piety. It likewise shews the smallness of many of the livings then in Scotland; as the five hundred merks mentioned were less than £30 sterling.

"SIR,

"There is one place indeed in my precinct now vacant, and yet undisposed of, by the voluntary removal of the young man that was in it to a better benefice, and this is likewise in

my hand; but it is of so wretchedly mean provision, that I am ashamed to name it, little (I think) above five hundred merks by year. If the many instances of that kind you have read have made you in love with *voluntary poverty*, there you may have it; but wheresoever you are or shall be for the little rest of your time, I hope you are, and still will be daily advancing in that blest poverty of spirit, that is the only true height and greatness of spirit in all the world intitling to a crown, for theirs is the kingdom of Heaven. Oh! what are the scraps that the great ones of this world are scrambling for compared with that pretension. I pray you, as you find an opportunity, though possibly little or no inclination to it, yet bestow one line or two upon

Your poor Friend and Servant

R. L."

To the same person he writes thus, in another letter,

"Thorns grow every where, and from all things below, and to a soul transplanted out of itself into the root of Jesse, peace grows every where too, from him who is called our peace, and whom we still find the more to be so, the more entirely we live in him, being dead to this world and self and all things beside him. Oh when shall

it be, well let all the world go as it will, let this be our only pursuit and ambition, and to all other things *fiat voluntas tua, Domine*, "Lord, thy will be done!"

The following extract breathes the spirit of a christian hero.

"Courage, it shall be well. We follow a conquering general; yea, who hath conquered already; *et qui semel vicit pro nobis, semper vincit in nobis*; "*He who hath once conquered for us, always conquers in us.* For myself at present, I am (as we use to say) that is, this little contemptible lodge of mine, is not very well; but that will pass some way or other, as it is best; and even while the indisposition lasts, Oh! how much doth it heighten the sweet relish of peace within, of which I cannot speak highly (for to you I can speak just as it is). But methinks I find a growing contempt of all this world, and consequently some further degrees of that quiet which is only subject to disturbance by our inordinate fancies and desires, and receding from the blest center of our rest: *for hurries of the world you know the way*[b], and in these retiring rooms we may meet and be safe and quiet."

How far Bishop Leighton was from imposing

[b] Isaiah xxvi. 20.

a clergyman on any parish, is evident from the following letter to the Heritors of the parish of Stratton.

"WORTHY GENTLEMEN AND FRIENDS,

"Being informed that it is my duty to present a person fit for the charge of the ministry now vacant with you, I have thought of one, whose integrity and piety I am so fully persuaded of, that I dare confidently recommend him to you as one who, if the hand of God do bind that work upon him amongst you, is likely, through the blessing of the same hand, to be very serviceable to the building up of your souls heavenwards, but is as far from suffering himself to be obtruded, as I am for obtruding any upon you: so that unless you invite him to preach, and after hearing him, declare your consent and desire towards his embracing of the call, you may be secure from the trouble of hearing any further concerning him, either from himself or me; and if you please to let me know your mind, your reasonable satisfaction shall be to my utmost power endeavoured by,

Your affectionate Friend,
and humble Servant,
R. LEIGHTON."

That his liberal soul abhorred covetousness is evident from the manner in which he conducted himself towards his parishioners in pecuniary affairs, and particularly from his readiness not to urge his right against the poor. The following extract respects some money supposed to be due to him at Dunblane; and was written after his translation to Glasgow.

"DEAR FRIEND,

"Whether you know the particular purport of the inclosed you sent me I know not; but it is to quit Ten pounds sterling supposed due to me from the party that pleads inability: and doubtless your recommendation, together with the charity of the thing (if it shall appear to be so) would easily give law to me for a greater sum than that."

After explaining the particulars of the case, the pious Bishop adds,

"You and I are, I trust, upon a design that will reflect a very low estimate upon all below it, and it shall certainly succeed if we be careful to stick to our leader, and follow him.

Pray for

Your poor Friend and Servant

R. L."

His tender sympathy with the afflicted is expressed in the following extract. The letter was written to a lady, and a stranger, under trouble of mind.

"I am well assured, that all that I have heard from the wittiest atheists and libertines in the world, is nothing but bold ravery and madness, and their whole discourse a heap of folly and ridiculous nonsense; for what probable account can they give of the wonderful frame of the visible world, without the supposition of an eternal and infinite power, and wisdom and goodness that formed it and themselves, and all things in it? And what can they think of the many thousands of martyrs in the first age of christianity, that endured not simple death, but all the inventions of the most exquisite tortures, for their belief of that most holy faith, which if the miracles that confirmed it had not persuaded them to, they themselves had been thought the most prodigious miracles of madness in all the world? It is not want of reason on the side of religion that makes fools disbelieve it, but the interest of their brutish lusts and dissolute lives makes them wish it were not true; and there is this vast difference betwixt you and them; they would gladly believe less than they do, and you would also gladly believe

more than they do: they are sometimes pained and tormented with apprehensions that the doctrine of religion is or may be true; and you are perplexed with suggestions to doubt of it, which are to you as unwilling and unwelcome as these apprehensions of its truth are to them. Believe it, madam, these different thoughts of yours, are not yours, but his that inserts them, and throws them as fiery darts into your mind, and they shall assuredly be laid to his charge, and not to yours. Think you that infinite goodness is ready to take advantage of his poor creatures, and to reject and condemn those that, against all the assaults made upon them, desire to keep their heart for him, and to acknowledge him, and to love him, and live to him. He made us, and knows our mould, and, as a father, pities his children, and pities them that fear him, for he is their father, and the tenderest and kindest of all fathers; and as a father pities his child when it is sick, and in the rage and ravery of a fever, though it even utter reproachful words against himself, shall not our dearest father both forgive and pity those thoughts in any child of his, that arise not from any wilful hatred of him, but are kindled in hell within them? And no temptation hath befallen you in this, but that which has been incident to men, and to the best of men; and their

heavenly Father hath not only forgiven them, but in due time hath given them an happy issue out of them, and so he will assuredly do to you."

The following appears to have been written a short time before his own death.

"I find daily more and more reason without me, and within me yet much more, to pant and long to be gone. I am grown exceeding uneasy in writing and speaking; yea almost in thinking, when I reflect how cloudy our clearest thoughts are: but, I think again what other can we do, till the day break, and the shadows flee away; as one that lieth awake in the night must be thinking, and one thought that will likely oftenest return, when by all other thoughts he finds little relief, is *when will it be day?*"

In these specimens there is a *naiveté*, a simplicity and honesty of expression which discover the writer's soul. No art, or labour appears; but all is natural, easy, unaffected, and guileless. We see, too, that objects of the highest importance, and universally interesting, were the most congenial to Leighton's mind. The passing occurrences of the day, and the

squabbles of parties, have no place, as far as is known, in his epistolary correspondence. It is much to be regretted, that inquiries after a collection of his letters, which Dr. Doddridge possessed, have been ineffectual. Yet the valuable fragments enable us to form an estimate of the whole.

The tenor of Leighton's conversation was in perfect unison with his letters; edifying, grave, spiritual, and heavenly. His mouth was a well of wisdom, and the law of kindness was in his tongue. His words were neither trivial, nor bitter. Scarcely even an idle word was pronounced by him; and he seemed habitually to feel that frame in which a wise and good man would wish to die.

Our author, it must be allowed, was somewhat melancholy; yet without dark gloom, or forbidding austerity. This turn arose partly from constitution, and was increased by the dismal state of public affairs. The character of the times was such, through the dissipated gaiety of the court, and the horrid oppression of the country, that it was sufficient to make any man, far less sensible and feeling than Leighton, pensive and sad. Almost never was he seen to laugh, and but rarely smiled. Living so re-

tired, and generally absorbed in meditation, he seldom came within the reach of those occasional and innocent sallies of fancy which embellish and amuse human life.

His temper, too, as may be supposed from the account already given, was gentle and peaceable. He retaliated no reproach, resented no injury; but overcame evil with good. Strenuous were the efforts, and great the sacrifices, which he made, to unite contending parties. In his discourse on the characters of the wisdom from above, our author, without knowing it, draws a faithful portrait of himself;—pure, peaceable, gentle, and easy to be entreated; full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality, and without hypocrisy. Peace and charity, indeed, are his favourite topics; and, like the beloved disciple, he paints from the life, and from the abundance of his own heart.

None of his discourses are written in the form, and still less in the spirit of controversy. Leighton never dipped his pen in gall; and not a particle is to be seen of the *odium Theologicum*, (Theological hatred) a phrase which has been used among open infidels and lukewarm professors, always without candour, and often without justice. This great divine in meekness in-

structed even such bitter adversaries; and contended against error with scriptural weapons, particularly by preaching the truth. One of the most illustrious ornaments of the Church of England, said to the writer of the present biographical sketch, and the saying is too valuable to be lost; "Fill the bushel with good grain, and it will be extremely difficult for enemies to add chaff."

Humility was a beautiful trait in the character of this excellent man, which shaded and recommended his other great and good qualities. Far from loving the pre-eminence, and courting applause, he always kept in the back-ground; and was occasionally forced from retirement only by an imperious sense of duty. Instead of pushing himself at any time into notice, he shrunk as the sensitive plant when it is touched. The body of death sat heavy upon him, and deeply sensible of his own imperfections, our author grew in humility, as he grew in holiness. His diffidence, however, was extreme; for, though frequently solicited to publish discourses, he would never consent; and none of his invaluable works were printed during his life.

The modesty of Leighton was the more

comely and ornamental, that it was joined to high intellectual capacity and attainments, and to the graces of elocution. His acquaintance with literature was various and profound. Of a quick and capacious understanding; of an elevated genius, and refined taste; of a vigorous and elegant fancy; of a retentive memory,—he drank deep at the springs of knowledge, by close application, and almost incessant study. Our author had perused with care and delight the Roman and the Greek classics. His Latin would do honour to the Augustan age; and is not inferior in purity and strength to the style of the learned and polished Buchanan. The Hebrew was quite familiar to him, and he possessed a critical knowledge of that concise and energetic tongue. He understood French well; and could both speak and write the language with correctness and ease. He knew philosophy in the greater part of its branches; and had read with attention and profit, history sacred and prophane, civil and ecclesiastical, ancient and modern. Divinity, however, was his principal study; and he was truly a master in Israel. Of the most of these rare and useful endowments his writings afford abundant and incontrovertible evidence.

Leighton used all his learning as an handmaid to religion, and employed it in the service of the sanctuary. He derived Theological knowledge, not so much from human systems, as from the sacred oracles; and that knowledge received a mellowness from his own natural and gracious placidity. At times, a Boanerges in sentiment; he was usually, both in sentiment and style, a son of consolation. The co-temporary bishops of the North, compared with him, were dwarfs in mind, and wolves in disposition. There were several bright constellations of divines, both in England and Scotland. But, Leighton shone pre-eminent above the majority; and was a star of the first magnitude. Among the first preachers of his own day, he has never been surpassed, taking him all in all, since that period., More sententious than Reynolds, more refined than Howe, more eloquent than Baxter; less diffuse and argumentative, but more practical than Charnock; less profound, but clearer and more savoury than Owen; less ingenious, but sweeter and more sublime than Hall,—he will not suffer by comparison with any divine, in any age.

The manner of his delivery added much to the effect of Leighton's discourses. His voice was, indeed, feeble; but clear, flexible, and melodi-

ous. His pronunciation was deliberate, and rather slow; yet distinct, warm and pathetic. His attitude and his gesture were highly graceful. He showed and excited sensibility. His manner arrested attention; a wandering eye was never seen when he preached; and the audience were frequently dissolved in tears, while himself was visibly and deeply affected. The very look of Leighton, it is recorded by some who heard him, was singularly expressive of holy ardour in the gospel, and of tender pity for the souls of men. In short, his oratory has been aptly compared by a good judge, the late Dr. Doddridge, to the admirable description of the eloquence of Ulysses by Homer, the greatest of ancient poets. Pure, soft, and insinuating, it resembled the flakes of falling snow. The impression of Leighton's manner on the minds of some of his hearers was so deep, that, a long time afterwards, it continued to be distinct and lively. One of them, who was no flatterer, declared at the distance of thirty years, that the image of Leighton in the pulpit was clearly before his eyes.

The discourses of our author, independently of such external and adventitious aids, possess uncommon merit; and, though they must labour under the disadvantages of posthumous works, none of them being intended by him

for the public eye, and therefore not having been touched by his finishing hand, they nevertheless rank high both in matter and language. His works may be compared to a river, deep and clear, gentle and pleasant, which, winding through the vallies, refreshes, adorns, and fructifies, wherever it flows. The streams have, for many years, made glad the city of God; and now that they are increased, and several obstructions removed, more extensive usefulness may be expected. We shall attempt to draw a faint but faithful sketch of the leading excellencies of these writings.

The first requisite, and one absolutely essential, in the discourses of ministers, is evangelical truth. Without this, though the language be correct and elegant, the figures just and ingenious, and the whole composition admirable, there is no food for the souls of men; as a stone finely polished is given instead of wholesome and nutritious bread. The soul may be killed no less effectually, yet more slowly, by the want of proper aliment, than by the rankest poison of error. Notwithstanding the infidel and impious cry, "What is truth?" we boldly affirm, that those doctrines which, for the sake of distinction, are usually denominated Calvinistic, are the true doctrines of the gospel; revealed by the God of

grace in his word, and blessed by his Spirit; be preached by his servants, and professed b his people. These are truths taught in th articles of the Church of England, and in th standards of the Church of Scotland; whil alas! few ministers comparatively of either church preach them. Not so Leighton; whc being dead, yet speaketh, particularly in this new and enlarged edition of his works; and condemns such erroneous hirelings, who eat the fat, and clothe themselves with the wool, but starve or poison the flock. That good bishop led his flock, and directs every reader, to green pastures. No abstruse speculations, hard as a piece of oak; nor airy speculations, empty as chaff, are to be found in his writings. He taught the gospel, the whole gospel, and nothing but the gospel.—Evangelical truth is here at once pure, without any mixture of gross error; and full without lacking any essential part. Far from being ashamed of the gospel, it was his glory; the ground of his hope, the matter of his profession, and the grand theme of his discourses.

As many, and some even of those who pretend to preach, are ready to carp at the word *gospel*, though it be scriptural, and to the convinced sinner a joyful sound, we may observe, that our author preached the gospel both in the

restricted and in the enlarged sense of the term. The glad tidings of full and free salvation through the righteousness of Jesus Christ, the grace of God, and the work of the Holy Spirit, were published by this faithful messenger. Yet, he neglected not to preach the moral law, for the conviction of transgressors, and as an immutable rule of life to them who believe. Nay, all revealed truths, which form the links of one chain, and constitute the parts of one fabric, were attended to by Leighton, and exhibited in their proper place, order, and connection. The perfections, personal subsistence, and counsels of Deity; the primitive state and the fall of man; the guilt and depravity of the human race; the various workings and effects of moral corruption; the essential and mediatorial characters of the Saviour; the divinity of his person, his substitution in the place of the guilty, and his complete satisfaction for sin; the personality, divinity, operations, and influences of the Spirit; the free call of the gospel; the necessity of an appropriating faith; justification freely by grace; the necessity of a new nature, and of holiness; perseverance in true religion; the future felicity of the righteous, and eternal misery of the wicked;—these were the topics on which this preacher of righteousness dwelt with perspicuity and energy. One,

or other of them occurs in every page, almost every sentence of his writings. Generally th appear as rich clusters, not as two or thr berries on the uppermost bough. The trees knowledge and of life, laden with the choice fruits, were never perhaps more closely unite than in the writings of Leighton.

Not only are the sentiments of our author entirely evangelical; his language is unexceptionable, and extremely guarded. Though the gospel was never better understood in Britain, nor more purely preached, than in his day; particularly in England by hundreds of conscientious and eminent non-conformists, yet loose and ambiguous terms and expressions sometimes crept into their discourses. Even the great and good Baxter, faithful and acute as he was in general, adopted, from an excessive desire of peace, and a confusion of ideas, phrases, about the condition of the new covenant, highly improper. His error, chiefly in expression, has produced error in sentiment of the most absurd nature and dangerous tendency. To represent faith and repentance as conditions of the covenant of grace, is to confound the only meritorious ground of justification before God with the act of reliance on that ground, and with the godly sorrow for sin which flows

from justifying faith; to turn blessings promised into conditions, and convert the covenant of grace into a covenant of works. Nothing of this kind, with a single exception, is to be found in the writings of Leighton; who, at least equally pacific with Baxter, had more distinct views of the nature and place of justifying faith, and shunned not to exhibit them in a conspicuous light. The single exception to which we refer, seems to have arisen from a flight of fancy; is nevertheless capable of a sound sense, and is even partly corrected in the immediate context. Our author, in his Exposition of 1 Pet. ii. 24, "by whose stripes ye were healed," speaks of "the issue of repentance, which cleanses the vicious humour of our corrupt nature." But, the whole efficacy is ascribed in the first part of the same sentence to the merit of Christ; and the more a man mourns for sin from evangelical principles, the more will he both hate and forsake it. Repentance is, in this respect, an "issue," a means of diminishing corruption, and of promoting spiritual health. Had our author written with his usual justness of thought, and refinement of fancy, he would rather have spoken of repentance as the sorrow of a patient for unkindness to the matchless physician who heals with his own blood, and saves by his own death. That dis-

course, however, excepting the phrase which we have quoted, is brimful of the gospel; and in all his discourses besides, Leighton guards with the most vigilant care against legality on the one hand, and Antinomianism on the other.

Sublimity of thought, and sometimes of language, is the next distinguished quality in the writings of Leighton which we shall specify. Discourses may be replenished with the gospel, while they do not contain one sublime sentiment or expression. Preachers of ordinary talents, it is true, and even of poor genius, if they make numerous quotations from the sacred volume, must occasionally soar as the eagle. For, no book abounds so much, and so eminently, in lofty ideas and phrases as the book of God. Beside those truths divine and evangelical, all of which are superlatively grand in their nature, and often expressed sublimely, there are many noble sentiments, and various instances of the true sublime, in descriptions and denunciations, in the Psalms and prophecies. Jehovah, clothed with majesty, appears and speaks, lightens and thunders; or, as the sun, goes forth in his strength and glory. In some uninspired writings, too, particularly those of Homer and Milton, there is a wonderful elevation of thought and style. But, few minds are suited

to feel the complete force of such an elevated and magnificent range. Like persons who have no ear for music, and on whom the compositions of Handel are lost, they read the sublimest passages without thrilling and admiring rapture. The mind of Leighton was of a superior cast, and fitted to catch a portion of celestial elevation and fire. Of an ardent and feeling soul, he kindled and thrilled at the sight of objects adapted by their own nature, and by the manner of representing them, to astonish and entrance. Few pages in his works are without instances of sublimity, especially of sublime thought. While there is nothing low and grovelling, he frequently rises to the majestic. Two passages of this kind may be mentioned, and they are two among a great multitude equally grand.

The first is in his discourse on Isaiah lx. 1. "Arise, shine, for thy light is come," &c.

"Arise then, *for the glory of the Lord is risen.*] The day of the gospel is too precious that any of it should be spent in sleep or idleness, or worthless business. Worthless business detains many of us; *arise* immortal souls from moyling in the dust, and working in the clay like *Egyptian* captives. Address yourselves to more no-

ble work; there is a Redeemer come that will pay you ransom, and rescue you from such vile service, for more excellent employment. It is strange how the souls of Christians can so much forget their first original from heaven, and their new hopes of returning thither, and the rich price of their redemption, and forgetting all these, dwell so low, and dote so much upon trifles; how is it that they hear not their well-beloved's voice, crying, *Arise my love, my fair one, and come away?* Though the eyes of true believers are so enlightened, that they shall not sleep unto death, yet their spirits are often seized with a kind of drowsiness and slumber, and sometimes even then, when they should be of most activity. The time of Christ's check to his three disciples made it very sharp, though the words are mild, *What? could you not watch with me one hour?* Shake off, believing souls, that heavy humour. *Arise*, and satiate the eye of faith with the contemplation of Christ's beauty, and follow after him till you attain the place of full enjoyment. And you others that never yet saw him, *arise*, and admire his matchless excellency. The things you esteem great, are but so through ignorance of his greatness; his brightness, if you saw it, would obscure to you the greatest splendor of the world, as all those stars that go never down upon us, yet

they are swallowed up in the surpassing light of the sun when it arises. *Stand up from the dead, and he shall give you light. Arise and work while it is day, for the night shall come wherein none can work*, says our Saviour himself. Happy are they that arise early in the morning of their youth; for the day of life is very short, and the art of christianity long and difficult. Is it not a grievous thing, that men never consider, why they came into the world, till they be upon the point of going out again, nor think how to live, till they be summoned to die? But most of all unhappy, he that never wakens out of that pleasing dream of false happiness, till he fall into eternal misery: *arise* then betimes, and prevent this sad awakening."

The second is in his sermon on John xxi. 22. "What is that to thee? Follow thou me."

"Let us therefore follow the holy Jesus. Our own concernments concern us not, compared to this. *What is that to thee?* may be said of all things besides this. All the world is one great impertinency to him who contemplates God, and his Son Jesus. Great things, coaches, furniture, or houses, concern the outward pomp or state of the world, but not the necessities of life; neither can they give ease to him that is

pinched with any one trouble. He that hath twenty houses, lies but in one at once; he that hath twenty dishes on his table, hath but one belly to fill: so, *ad supervacua sudatur*, "*he sweats about superfluities.*" All are uncertain, sudden storms fall on; and riches fly away as a bird to heaven, and leave those who look after them sinking to hell in sorrow."

"A christian is solicitous about nothing; if he be raised higher, it is that he desires not; if he fall down again, he is where he was. A well fixed mind, though the world should crack about him, shall be in quiet: but when we come to be stretched on our death-bed, things will have another visage; it will pull the rich from his treasure, strip the great of his robes and glory, and snatch the amorous gallant from his fair beloved mistress, and from all we either have or grasp at. Only sin will stick fast and follow us, these black troops will clap fatal arrests on us, and deliver us over to the jailor. Are these contrivances, or the dark dreams of melancholy? All the sublimities of holiness may be arrived at by the deep and profound belief of these things. Let us therefore ask, Have we walked thus and dressed our souls by this pattern? But this hath a nearer aspect to pastors, who should be copies of the fair ori-

ginal, and second patterns who follow nearer Christ; they should be imitating him in humility, meekness and contempt of the world, and particularly in affection to souls, feeding the flock of God. Should we spare labour, when he spared not his own blood?"

These specimens shew, that Leighton borrowed his peculiar turn of thought and expression, in a great measure, from the sacred oracles. Let piety and good taste animate preachers to follow his example; and the Bible is the only source from which they can draw copiously, without the least degree of plagiarism.

Our author, often sublime, is always plain and simple. Nothing, indeed, can be more opposite to elevation of sentiment and style than obscure or turgid language. The design of speaking, and of writing, is to be understood; nor is plainness ever so necessary as in sacred discourses addressed to a popular audience. To the poor the gospel is preached; and high swollen words of vanity, as well as scholastic phrases, greatly diminish its lustre and effect. Leighton's dress of thought, occasionally rich and splendid, is generally distinguished for clearness and simplicity; and when the most elevated, is the most simple and clear. The

reader cannot misunderstand his meaning. If we reflect that our author wrote in a period when the Latin language was cultivated with greater care than the English, and when uncouth phrases were common, especially among the clergy, it is surprising that so few of such barbarous modes of speech occur in his writings. Though, too, he had read the works of mystic divines, and passionately admired some of their sentiments, which resemble grains of the finest gold in a heap of rubbish, he did not imitate their perplexed style, arising from the dark ages. In some parts of his writings, it must be confessed, there is a quaintness and subtlety of expression; as in his Rules for a Holy Life, and his treatise on the First Causes of Things. But, these seem to have been intended solely for his own use; and, having collected good matter, he was not solicitous about the form and style.—In almost every other part of his works, we see here and there fragments of painted glass; but usually we behold the transparent and pellucid mirror. This is brightened with many beautiful figures; furnished by extensive reading, and a fine imagination.

Clear as Leighton's style is, he does not always observe the *lucidus ordo*, or an exact and luminous arrangement. A chain of thought,

indeed, pervades the whole, but the author often passes imperceptibly from one link to another, and the reader stops to discover the connection. Many divines of that age superabounded in minute divisions: and by metaphysical accuracy broke down and minced their subjects. Leighton perceiving this fault, and desirous of avoiding and amending it, verged towards the opposite extreme. No formal method occurs in any of his discourses; he seldom gives more than one sermon on the same text; condenses and throws out massy thoughts complete and entire; and, when he strikes a rich vein, pursues it in a few sentences or pages with astonishing dexterity. Somewhat of the French manner, without its lightness and gaiety, appears in his compositions. The several parts, and leading expressions of the passage, are the heads of his discourse; and, when we think, that he must have exhausted the subject, there comes forth another mass superior to the rest in weight and value, and more highly polished. The conclusion of his admirable sermon, on "The Wrath of Man praising God," proves and illustrates the truth of this remark.

"Have not the saints in all ages been content to convey pure religion to posterity in streams of their own blood, not of others?

Well, hold fast by this conclusion, that God can limit and bind up the most violent wrath of man; that though it swell, it will not break forth. The stiffest heart, as the current of the most impetuous rivers, is in his hand, to appoint its channels, and turn it as he pleaseth. Yea, it is he that hath shut up the very sea with bars and doors, and said, *Hitherto shalt thou come, and no further; here shall thy proud waves be stayed*[c]. To see the surges of a rough sea come in towards the shore, a man would think that they were hastening to swallow up the land, but they know their limits, and are beaten back into foam. Though the waves thereof toss themselves as angry at their restraint, yet the small sand is a check to the great sea, *yet can they not prevail, though they roar, yet can they not pass over it*, says Jeremiah v. 22.

"The sum is this: What God permits his church's enemies to do, is for his own further glory; and reserving this, there is not any wrath of man so great, but he will either sweetly calm it, or strongly restrain it."

It may be naturally expected from this account, that our author would be remarkable for

[c] Job xxxviii. 10, 11.

variety. His invention was fertile and forcible; being supplied by a mind well-stored, and guided by a mature and vigorous judgment. He treats a vast variety of subjects with the grace of novelty, and the same subject always in a new manner. Some ministers have two or three favourite topics, some only one subject. There is an insipid uniformity, too, in their way of composing. Whatever be the text, to that topic they turn; and whatever be the occasion, the manner of composition is the same. Change the subject, move them from their customary routine, and the great preacher dwindles into insignificance. Even the famous Hervey confined his studies chiefly to the point of justification before God; and in illustrating and vindicating that fundamental and essential doctrine, he is doubtless deservedly eminent. No writings in the English language, perhaps, have been more extensively blessed. It may be remarked, by the bye, that while Hervey's matter has instructed and edified thousands, his manner has injured not a few young preachers, who foolishly mistake his glittering ornaments for a good and elegant style. It were better to imitate his rich evangelical strain; even though, like Hervey, they should confine themselves almost entirely to one part of divine truth. It is difficult to say, on what point Leighton excelled. He touches

occasionally every doctrine of the gospel, and always with the hand of a master; and, in every discourse, exhibits fully the way of salvation. In his sermons, doctrinal, experimental, and practical religion are finely blended. They resemble a Chinese garden, spacious, variegated, richly stocked, verdant and blooming on every side; not a single spot, mathematically trimmed, and abounding in false decorations.

In the works of Leighton there is a variety, not only of theological knowledge; but, of biblical criticism, and general literature. Biblical criticism, a portion of sacred learning almost totally neglected in the present day, was highly esteemed by our author. He became a considerable adept in that branch of useful knowledge, and employed it for the noblest purpose; to elucidate and enforce divine truth, not to make a parade of learning. His critical remarks on the original languages, in which the Old Testament and the New were written, are neither ostentatious, nor trifling; neither farfetched, nor tedious. They discover both judgment and ingenuity. This sacred mineralogist, instead of pursuing verbal criticism, which only levels a few inequalities of the surface, sinks a shaft, and brings forth precious ore from the mine below. By a masterly stroke,

often unexpectedly, and always in the most natural manner, he sets the truth in a new and refulgent light. His unrivalled Commentary on the First Epistle of Peter, contains many instances of this sort. Who is not struck with his incidental criticism on the phrase, "the manifold grace of God[d]!"

"The variety of these many gifts suits well with the singular riches and wisdom of their one giver, and with the common advantage and benefit of the many receivers. And in the usefulness of that variety to the receivers, shines forth the bounty and wisdom of the giver, in so ordering all that diversity, to one excellent end; so this *manifold grace* ποικιλη χαρις here, commends that πολυποικιλος σοφια, *manifold wisdom*, that the apostle speaks of, Eph. iii. 10."

"There is such an admirable beauty in this variety, such a symmetry and contemperature of different, yea of contrary qualities, as speaks his riches, that so divers gifts are from the same spirit. A kind of * *embroidering* of many colours happily mixt, as the word ποικιλλειν signifies; as it is in the frame of the natural body of

[d] 1 Pet. iv. 10.

* The Psalmist's word for the body, Psalm cxxxix. 15, is *curiously wrought*.

man as the lesser world, and in the composure of the greater world; thus in the church of God, the mystical body of Jesus Christ, exceeding both the former in excellency and beauty."

His critical Exposition of some of the Psalms shows strong and acute powers of mind; and, among intricacies apparently wild and barren to common readers, the most fragrant flowers bloom, and the richest fruits appear. The author ever seems to be in holy haste to present something profitable and pleasant.

The general literature of Leighton is still more conspicuous, than his attainments in biblical criticism.—It was the fashion of the day for ministers, in their public discourses, to make long quotations from heathen writers, and from the fathers of the Christian church; and these quotations were usually made in the words of the respective authors, consequently were unintelligible to the common people. Leighton, whose memory was very retentive, had stored his mind with the most remarkable facts in ancient history; with the sayings of wise men in former ages; with the disquisitions of philosophers, and the elegant labours of poets; with Pagan mythology, and the sentiments both of the Greek and the Latin Fathers. He possessed

discernment and sensibility to make the best use of such valuable treasures. While some of his contemporaries, therefore, amidst all their learning and piety, discovered a vicious and wretched taste, Leighton, by short and apt quotations, generally explained in the context, and by the happiest allusions, illustrated, diversified, and enlivened his discourses. He quotes from Plato and Seneca, from Chrysostome and Augustine; alludes to sublime or beautiful passages in Homer, Horace, and Virgil; and cursorily refers to several facts in history, as well as to various phenomena in the world of nature.

This imparted a dignity and a solemnity to the discourses of our author. But it is the dignity and solemnity of more than a learned man:—it is the solemnity of a man of God, and a messenger of the king Eternal. After a short and impressive preface, as the attentive reader will observe, Leighton spent a few minutes in prayer, and then preached. Standing in the pulpit, he remembered that having just spoken *to* God, he now spoke *for* him. An air of deep seriousness pervades all his discourses. Unlike those preachers, who degrade the ministerial office, prostitute the pulpit, and outrage decorum, by low buffoonery, to excite a smile, and gain applause; Leighton never lets himself

down, never trifles, never turns aside to catch a pretty thought for the entertainment of his hearers, or a ludicrous phrase for their merriment. He constantly speaks as a dying man to fellow mortals; as a herald to rebels, who have only a moment to consider; as a father to his children about their most important concerns. One sees, in every sentence, the dignified, earnest, faithful ambassador of Heaven.

The learning of Leighton was without pedantry, and his solemnity without stiffness. In the productions of some celebrated preachers great labour is visible. We see perpetually that the hammer and the file have been employed; and that there is a constant and painful effort to excite and preserve the attention of the hearer, or reader. Not a few of the thoughts themselves, perhaps, are rather forced and unnatural; being squeezed from the subject, as water from a sponge. In the works of our author, on the contrary, the thoughts rise naturally from the subject, distil as honey from the comb, and run clear to the last drop. He always enters on his subject like one who is master of it; and, throughout the discourse, seems to be at home, in a neat dress, and with easy manners. Even learned references and allusions, though a kind of foreigners, are introduced without any con-

straint, or stiff ceremony, and have almost the appearance and ease of natives.

A quality still more valuable belongs to our author's works; a quality which it is easier to conceive and feel, than to express or describe. The word *unction* conveys the best idea of it. This quality is opposed to insipidity and dryness, in sentiment, style, and manner;—especially in manner and style. An eminent professor of rhetoric, the late Dr. Blair, has defined unction to be, "the union of gravity and warmth." The definition is not perfectly just. Seriousness, a more specific term than gravity, is essential to unction; and this includes not merely warmth, but a certain heavenly, penetrating strain in the turn of sentiment and expression: when discourses are delivered, there must be a similar strain in the modulation of the voice, and in the whole manner. The sermons of that correct and elegant preacher, Dr. Blair, are very cold and insipid; and much inferior to the discourses of his colleague, the late Rev. Robert Walker, as well in point of chaste simplicity and true feeling, as of scriptural sentiment; nor do the former possess the easy, flowing, animated manner of Barrow, or of Atterbury. In short, beside the absence of evangelical truth in a great degree, they are remarkably deficient

in savour. To impart sap and vital heat, the pure gospel is necessary; and, for the want of it, no abilities, no correctness, no elegance, can possibly compensate. Sermons, from which the peculiar doctrines of Christianity are almost wholly excluded, may paint to the imagination, but never to the heart: they exhibit in their finest imagery only beautiful icicles, and all their flowers bloom in the polar regions. These may be the effect, it is true, of a lively and warm fancy; but, the heart of the preacher appears to be untouched, and discovers nothing of the ardour and sweets of devotion. Some evangelical discourses, too, are composed and delivered with dryness. They may be compared to stale bread; wholesome and nutritive, but not the most palatable. Indeed, frigid orthodoxy, either in a minister, or in the hearers of the gospel, is to be deprecated fervently. Leighton's discourses have a high degree of warmth, and unction. They are a sweet savour of Christ, and as ointment poured out. Their beauty is as the olive tree, and their smell as Lebanon. The face of the preacher is anointed with the oil of gladness, shines with heavenly lustre, and diffuses fragrance all around. One cannot read a page, without being moved and refreshed: a soft balmy sensation thrills through the soul. This rare and excellent quality may

be illustrated by quoting a passage from his Sermon, on "The Name of Jesus fragrant;" and the person who can read the passage, without discerning and experiencing its odoriferous nature, has no spiritual senses.

"What strange odds is there, betwixt the opinion of Christ's spouse and the world that knows him not? They wonder what she sees in him desirable; she wonders that they are not all ravished with his excellencies. They prefer the basest vanities in the world before him; she finds the choicest and richest things in the world too mean to resemble the smallest part of his worth. See in this *Song* how busily and skilfully she goes to all the creatures, and crops the rarest pieces in nature and art to set forth her well-beloved, and seems to find them all too poor for her purpose. One while she extols him above all things beautiful, and pleasant to the eye; another while above things delectable to the taste, as in the former verse, *Thy loves are better than wine*, and here prefers the perfume of his graces to the most precious ointments.

"When a natural eye looks upon the sacrament, to wit, of the Lord's Supper, it finds it a bare and mean kind of ceremony. Take heed there be not many that come to it, and partake

of it with others that prize it little, have but low conceits of it, and do indeed find as little in it, as they look for. But oh! what precious consolation and grace doth a believer meet with at this banquet? How richly is the table furnished to his eye; what plentiful varieties employ his hand and taste? what abundance of rare dainties? Yet there is nothing but one here, but that one is all things to the believing soul, it finds his love is sweeter than the richest wine to the taste, or best odours to the smell; and that delightful word of his, *Thy sins are forgiven thee*, is the only music to a distressed conscience."

The works of our author, however, are not merely suitable and highly gratifying to a spiritual taste. Without a single exception they are eminently practical. The great design of preaching is, not to amuse the fancy, not to store the understanding; but to make men wise and good, to form the heart, and regulate the conduct. Leighton excels in explaining and urging religious and moral duties; and he always grafts and builds them on the doctrines of the gospel. These are the proper root of the tree, and the only foundation of a good superstructure. It is painful to observe, that some who bear the name of ministers subvert, by the

order, or rather the disorder, of their inculcating morality, all the principles of scripture, of reason, and of common sense. In any other case, they would be reckoned worse than foolish. Our author never loses sight, for a moment, either of the necessity of religious and moral conduct, or of the place which it should occupy. Some of his discourses are entirely practical; but still he keeps in view the root and foundation. In other discourses which are doctrinal, he intersperses practical hints; and shews at large the necessity of obedience to the law, in both its essential parts. His highest raptures are the reverse of enthusiasm: as they lead, with increased force, to the way of the divine commandments.

But the crowning excellence of Leighton's discourses is, the rich and deep vein of experimental religion which runs through them all. Experimental religion is to the practice of piety and morality, what life is to motion, or the heart to the body; the necessary spring and impulse. The former, too, always includes proper exercise of soul, or is accompanied with it. The God of grace meets those who rejoice, and work righteousness; those who remember him in his ways; and ask the way to Sion, with their faces thitherwards. Discourses, in which religious

experience and religious exercise are totally omitted, or scarcely ever touched, are essentially defective. The tree must be made good, that the fruit may be sound and sweet; the fountain be purified, that the waters may be salutary. Accordingly, Leighton often urges the absolute necessity of the first and radical experience of religion, in a change of nature. He dwells frequently on religious experiences and exercises both pleasant and painful; on the various workings of gracious principles, and of remaining depravity. Our author, at the same time, warns against enthusiasm; or heat without light, impression without practice. While on the one hand he directs and comforts the genuine saint; on the other he exposes and alarms the self-deceiver.—Some have remarked, and justly, that among the reasons why the gospel is committed to men, and not to angels, God in wisdom and kindness intended that his servants should be capable of entering deeply into the feelings of their hearers, of experiencing the power of saving grace, and exemplifying all the duties of religion. Leighton, in this point of view, was an experimental and practical preacher. He writes like one who knew and felt the terrors of the Lord, and who had also tasted that the Lord is gracious. He appears, in various instances, to be detailing his own experience and

exercise; and sometimes passes from instruction to confession, ejaculation, and praise. As a nurse, he is not only gentle, and cherisheth; but takes by the arms, and teaches to go; and feeds his beloved charge with the same provision which, like the milk of a nurse, had been first received and digested by himself.

Yet, this is the person whom the infidel-historian, Hume, (Oh! the shame; ah! the grief), passes over in total silence; while he veils the treachery and cruelties of the infamous Sharpe, who did greater injury to the cause of religion than a thousand deists. How wide the difference, how marked the contrast, between the arch-bishop of St. Andrew's, and the arch-bishop of Glasgow! The former an angel of darkness, the latter an angel of light; the one a curse to the world, and the other a blessing.

If several cities contended for the honour of being the birth-place of Homer; England and Scotland, London and Edinburgh, Dunblane and Broadhurst, may lawfully claim Leighton as their own. England gave him birth, and Scotland gave him education; the latter was the scene of his active labours; the former the scene of his pious retirement from the world, and of his departure from this vale of tears:

Dunblane possesses his valuable library, and Broadhurst contains his precious dust.

What would be the glory of the Churches of England and Scotland, if all their pulpits, or the majority of them, were filled with such ministers as Leighton; particularly in the fundamental and essential qualities of orthodoxy and piety! Both churches, indeed, have their ornaments, and living ones too, who would reflect lustre on any society. But, the greater part, alas! preach another gospel. Of all the bishops in modern times, the late Dr. Horne, perhaps, came the nearest to our author, in his reluctant acceptance of a bishoprick, and in his calm departure in a lodging-house; especially, in the fervour of his piety, the amiableness of his temper, and the sweetness of his compositions. To those unacquainted with Bishop Horne's writings, the following specimen, which the reader may compare with Leighton's manner, must be acceptable. It is taken from the preface to his Commentary on the Book of Psalms.

"Could the author flatter himself, that any one would have half the pleasure in reading the following exposition, which he hath had in writing it, he would not fear the loss of his labour.

The employment detached him from the bustle and hurry of life, the din of politics, and the noise of folly: vanity and vexation flew away for a season; care and disquietude came not near his dwelling. He arose, fresh as the morning, to his task; the silence of the night invited him to pursue it; and he can truly say, that food and rest were not preferred before it. Every psalm improved infinitely on his acquaintance with it, and no one gave him uneasiness but the last; for then he grieved that his work was done. Happier hours than those which have been spent in these meditations on the songs of Sion, he never expected to see in this world. Very pleasantly did they pass, and move smoothly and swiftly along; for, when thus engaged, he counted no time. They are gone, but have left a relish, and a fragrance on the mind, and the remembrance of them is sweet."

Leighton, however, though less fanciful and elegant than Horne, was loftier and more original. The bishop of Norwich borrows many of his most beautiful sentiments and expressions from the ancient fathers; particularly from Tertullian and Cyprian, from Chrysostome and Augustine. Yet, the similar turn of his mind, and the force of his genius, make it difficult to

distinguish what he borrows from what he composes. His discourse on Patience, for example, is the substance of two discourses on the same subject by Tertullian and Cyprian: some ideas of the translator are interspersed; but, unless the original be consulted carefully, it is impossible for the Reader to say when Horne translates, and when he delivers his own thoughts. —The bishop of Dunblane never borrows, though he frequently quotes, or alludes.—It has been, also, remarked by some worthy clergymen of the Church of England, in the hearing of the present writer, that Dr. Horne, after he became a bishop, was not so decidedly and fully evangelical in his discourses, as before that period. But, there is an inflexible and happy uniformity in Dr. Leighton's writings. Whether he was the Presbyterian minister of Newbottle, or the bishop of Dunblane, or the archbishop of Glasgow; whether he preached in the most obscure parish-church, or in the most conspicuous and magnificent cathedral; before illiterate rustics, or before the high court of Parliament,—this evangelical *Abdiel*[t] published the gospel of grace with the same plainness, and the same warmth.

[t] Unshaken, unseduc'd, unterrify'd,
His loyalty he kept, his love, his zeal;
Nor number, nor example, with him wrought
To swerve from truth.

MILTON.

Such are the outlines of the life and works of a man; whose life, notwithstanding its general privacy, furnishes a variety of important incidents, and whose works have long praised him in the gates. Attempts have been made repeatedly to pourtray his character; churchmen and dissenters, independents and presbyterians, uniting to strew his grave with the laurel and the olive, and to erect for him a frail memorial.

Not to mention incidental and public commendations, while Leighton lived, and frequently since his death, by Hervey, Miles, Bennet, and others; Dr. Gilbert Burnet, one of our author's intimate companions, records, in "the History of his Own Times," and in his "Pastoral Care," several circumstances relative to Leighton, and the high opinion which he entertained of that distinguished man. Though friendship guided the pencil, the picture is not overcharged. Various particulars, also, in the Life of Leighton, are contained in a memorial in the library of Dunblane. Partly from that memorial, and partly from Burnet's account, an unknown hand wrote a life of our author; which was prefixed to an edition of his Commentary on Peter, published at Edinburgh, about sixty years ago. The composition is va-

luable only for the facts which it contains; because, excepting those passages where Bishop Burnet's own words are quoted, it is both inelegant and irregular. Yet, that life, so unworthy of the subject, has been copied *verbatim* again and again. Dr. Doddridge, in his handsome and pathetic manner, briefly delineates the character of Leighton's works, in a preface to some of them, which were published at Edinburgh, soon after the edition already mentioned. Had the valuable life of Doddridge been spared, the world would have seen a just, full, and bright delineation of Leighton's character; a whole-length picture, the very likeness of the man, and highly finished. The Rev. Henry Foster, with his usual modesty and good sense, prefixed a short, but suitable and lively introduction to a new and neat edition, printed at London, in the year 1777. Mr. Foster, it may be observed in the passing, is not unlike Leighton, in his celibacy; his retirement; his love of peace; and his sweet, savoury manner of preaching.

The writer of the present account has availed himself of the materials already published; and of a manuscript obligingly communicated by J. Coldstream, Esq. principal clerk of the diocese of Dunblane, and one of the sheriffs of the county of Perth, in stating facts and circum-

stances; and partly, too, in delineating the character of the author. But, the arrangement, the style, and the reflexions, are his own. Several anecdotes, concerning the excellent bishop, which the editor was led to expect, either proved to be trivial, or could not be sufficiently authenticated. The character of Leighton, however, it is presumed, is here placed in a clearer and fuller light, than by any former biographer. Appropriate titles, which shew, in one short sentence, the nature and scope of the subjects, are prefixed, for the first time, to the several discourses. Various portions of these volumes were never published before; and particularly the Lectures on the first Nine Chapters of Matthew's gospel; and the lectures contain internal evidence of authenticity. The minute examination of his works, also, is entirely new. Some may think that too much, and others that too little has been said. To avoid prolixity, the editor would not say more; and to do justice to the worthy author, he could not say less.

The present writer has no party to serve, and no party to oppose; no secular end to gain, and no literary fame to acquire, by this labour. He has performed the task, whatever may be thought of its execution, *con amore*, as the Italians speak, with hearty affection. Before the age of seven-

teen, he saw in the cottage of a Scots gardener, a small detached volume of Leighton's Sermons; without the title-page, or any mark to indicate the author. Taking it up, and being much struck with the first page, he enquired of the possessor, whether he knew the author? "No, Sir," was the reply; "but, that book has been blessed to my soul, and must have been written by some great and good man." He never rested till he discovered the author, and procured all his works then published. Now, after the lapse of thirty years, and having read the discourses often, his esteem is increased; and he shall ever reckon it a signal honour conferred upon him, to have been, in any degree, instrumental in diffusing the knowledge and usefulness of such pure and precious productions. That the divine blessing may accompany them in the experience of every reader, when the hand which now writes shall be mouldered in the dust, is the cordial desire, and fervent prayer of,

GEORGE JERMENT.

Weston-place,
August 30, 1807.

MEDITATIONS

CRITICAL AND PRACTICAL,

ON

PSALM IV.

TITLE, *To the chief Musician on Neginoth, a Psalm of David.*

MANY of the calamities of good men look like miseries, which yet on the whole appear to have conduced greatly to their happiness; witness the many prayers which they poured out in those calamities; the many seasonable and shining deliverances which succeeded them, and the many hymns of praise they sung to God their deliverer: so that they seem to have been cast into the fire on purpose that the odour of their graces might diffuse itself all abroad.

The seventy *Greek* Interpreters seem to have read the word which we render *to the chief musician*, something different from the reading of our present *Hebrew* copy, i. e. *Lemenetz*, instead of *Lemenetzoth*; and therefore they render it, εἰς τέλος, as the *Latin* does *in finem, to the end.* From whence the *Greek* and *Latin* Fathers imagined that all the Psalms which bear this inscription, refer to the *Messiah*, the great *End* and the accomplishment of all things; a sentiment which was rather pious than judicious, and led them often to wrest several passages in the Psalms by violent and unnatural glosses: yet I would not morosely reject all interpretations of that

kind, seeing the apostles themselves apply to Christ many passages out of the Psalms and other books of the Old Testament, which if we had not been assured of it by their authority, we should hardly have imagined to have had any reference to him. Nor is it probable that they enumerated all the predictions of the Messiah, which are to be found in the prophetic writings, but only a very small part of them, while they often assure us that all the sacred writers principally center in him; and it is certain the passage out of this Psalm which *Austin*, and some others, suppose to refer to Christ, may be applied to him without any force upon the expression, *O ye sons of men, how long will ye turn my glory into shame* * *?* And what follows they explain with the same reference, *Know that the Lord has in a wonderful manner separated his Holy One unto himself.* Others however render the title in a different manner (*victori*) *to the conqueror.* Moderns translate it *præcentori*, or *præfecto musicæ*, to the chief musician, or him who presided over the band of musicians, which after all seems the most natural interpretation. The word *Neginoth*, which is sometimes rendered *stringed instruments*, did no doubt signify instruments of music which were struck to give their sound, as *Nehiloth*, in the title of Psalm v. seems, though not without some little irregularity in the etymology, to signify *instruments of wind music.* The Psalm was written by *David*, as a summary of the prayer he had poured out before God, when some exceeding great affliction seemed to besiege him on every side, whether it were the persecution of *Saul*, or the conspiracy of *Absalom* his son.

* They read it *gravi corde*, as expressive of the stupidity of heart which the rejecting of Christ and his gospel manifests.

Ver. 1. *Hear me when I call, O God of my righteousness, thou hast enlarged me when I was in distress, have mercy upon me, and hear my prayer.*

Hear me.] Behold the sanctuary to which this good man betook himself, in all the afflictions of his life; a sanctuary, which therefore he sets off, by accumulating a variety of expressive titles all to the same purpose [h], *My rock, my fortress, my strength, my deliverer, my buckler*, &c. He is indeed a *place of refuge to his children;* and therefore, as *Solomon* expresses it [i], *In the fear of the Lord is a strong confidence.* There seems something of an *Ænigma* in that expression, confidence in fear, yet the thing itself is most true. And again [k], *The name of the Lord is a strong tower, the righteous runneth into it, and is safe.* And they who know not this refuge are miserable; and when any danger arises, they run hither and thither, as *Antoninus* beautifully expresses it, μυιάων ἐπλομένων διαδρομαῖς, "They fly and flutter they know not whither." The life of man upon earth is a warfare; and it is much better, in the midst of enemies and dangers, to be acquainted with one fortress than with many inns. He that knows how to pray may be pressed, but cannot be overwhelmed *."

Hear me O Lord, hear my prayer.] He did not think it enough to have said this once, but he redoubled it. He who prays indeed is seriously engaged in the matter, and not only seriously, but vehemently too; and urges the address, because he himself is urged by his necessities and difficulties, and the ardent motion of his own desire and affection, and let it be observed, that these are the only prayers that mount on high, and offer a kind of grateful violence to heaven. Nor does the divine goodness grant any thing with greater readiness and delight, than the blessings which seem, if I may be allowed

[h] Psal. xviii. 1. [i] Prov. xiv. 26. [k] Prov. xviii. 10.
* Premi potest, non potest opprimi.

the expression, to be forced out and extorted by the most fervent prayer. So that *Tertullian* used to say, "That, when we pray eagerly, we do as it were combine in a resolute band, and lay siege to God himself*." These are the perpetual sacrifices in the temple of God (θυσίαι λογικαὶ) rational victims, prayers and intermingled vows, flowing from an upright and pure heart: but he who presents his petitions coldly, seems to bespeak a denial: for is it to be wondered at, that we do not prevail on God to hear our prayers, when we hardly hear them ourselves while we offer them? How can we suppose that such devotions should penetrate heaven, or ascend up to it? How should they ascend when they do not so much as go forth from our own bosoms, but like wretched abortives, die in the very birth? But why do I say that they do not go out from the inward recesses of our bosoms? alas! they are only formed on the surface of our lips, and they expire there, quite different from what *Homer* ascribes to his wise and eloquent *Ulysses*, when he says,

Ὄσσα τε μεγάλῳ ἐκ στήθεϊ ἶσε.

Forth from his breast he poured a mighty cry.

Thou God of my righteousness.] "Oh God who art righteous thyself, and art the patron of my righteousness, of my righteous cause, and of my righteous life;" for it is necessary that both should concur, if we desire to address our prayers to God with any confidence: not that depending upon this righteousness, we should seek the divine aid and favour, as a matter of just debt; for then, as the apostle argues, *it were no more of grace*[1]. Our prophet is certainly very far from boasting of his merits; for here he so mentions his righteousness, as at the same time to cast himself upon the divine mercy, *Have mercy upon me*, exercise thy propitious clemency towards me; and this is indeed the

* Precantes veluti stipato agmine Deum obsidere.

[1] Rom. xi. 6.

genuine temper of one who truly prays with sincerity and humility; for *polluted hands are an abomination to the Lord, and he hates the heart that is puffed up; he beholds the proud afar off*, as the celebrated parable of the Pharisee and Publican[m], is (you know) intended to teach us. *Thou art not a God that hast pleasure in wickedness. If I regard iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear me.* But *the righteous Lord loveth righteousness, and his countenance beholds the upright.* Whereas the words of the wicked, when he prays, are but as a fan, or as bellows, to blow up the divine displeasure into a flame: for how can he appease God who does not at all please him? or how can he please, who is indeed himself displeased with God, and who utterly disregards his pure laws, and that holiness which is so dear to him?

Thou hast enlarged me when I was in distress.] "I have often experienced both the riches of thy bounty, and the power of thy hand; and I derive confidence from thence, because thou art immutable, and canst never be wearied, by rescuing thy servants from the dangers that surround them." The examples we have heard of divine aid granted to others in their distress should animate us, as *David* recollected[n], *Our fathers trusted in thee, they trusted in thee, and thou didst deliver them;* but our own personal experiences are later and nearer, and he who treasures them up in his memory, not only thereby expresses his gratitude to God, but wisely consults his own interest; for he enjoys all those benefits of the divine favour twice, or rather as often as he needs, and pleases to renew the enjoyment of them: and he not only supports his faith in new dangers, by surveying God's former interpositions, but by laying them open before God in humble prayer, he more earnestly implores, and more effectually obtains new ones. By a secret kind of magnetism, he draws one benefit by another,

[m] Luke xviii. [n] Psalm xxii. 4.

he calls out, and as it were, allures the divine favour by itself.

Thou hast enlarged me.] The redeemed of the Lord may especially say so, in reference to that grand and principal deliverance, by which they are snatched from the borders of Hell, from the jaws of eternal death. The remembrance of so great salvation may well excite songs of perpetual praise to be ascribed *Deo liberatori*, to God the deliverer; and by this deliverance, so much more illustrious than any of the rest, they may be encouraged, in the confidence of faith, to urge and hope for the aids of his saving arm in every other exigence.

One thing more may be observed here, but it is so very obvious, that I shall only just mention it, as what needs not to be much inculcated, That he who has not been accustomed to prayer when the pleasant gales of prosperity have been breathing upon him, will have little skill and confidence in applying himself to it, when the storms of adversity arise; as *Xenophon* well observed in the person of *Cyrus**.

Ver. 2. *O ye sons of men! How long will ye turn my glory into shame? How long will ye love vanity, and seek after leasing? Selah.*

JUSTLY may we admire the force and the speed with which prayer flies up to heaven, and brings down answers from thence, ἅμα ἔπος, ἅμα ἔργον, *no sooner said than done.* If not as to the accomplishment of the thing itself, which perhaps may be more opportune in some future hour, yet at least in clear firm hope, and strong confidence, sent from above into a praying soul. Prayer soars above the violence and impiety of men, and with a swift

* Παρὰ τῶν θεῶν πρακτικώτερος ἂν εἴη, ὥσπερ καὶ παρ' ἀνθρώπων, ὅως μή, ὁπότε ἐν ἀπόροις εἴη, τότε κολακεύοι, ἀλλ' ὅτε ἄριστα πράττοι, τότε μάλιστα τοῦ θεῶν μέμνηται.

wing commits itself to heaven, with happy omen, if I may allude to what the learned tell us of the augury of the ancients, which I shall not minutely discuss. Fervent prayers stretch forth a strong wide extended wing, and while the birds of night hover beneath, they mount aloft, and point out as it were, the proper seats to which we should aspire. For certainly there is nothing that cuts the air so swiftly, nothing that takes so sublime, so happy, and so auspicious a flight as prayer, which bears the soul on its pinions, and leaves far behind all the dangers, and even the delights of this low world of ours. Behold this holy man, that just before was crying to God in the midst of distress, and with urgent importunity intreating that he might be heard, now as if he were already possessed of all he had asked, taking upon him boldly to rebuke his enemies, how highly soever they were exalted, and how potent soever they might be even in the royal palace.

O ye sons of men.] The *Hebrew* phrase here used, *bene Isch*, properly speaking, signifies *noble men* and *great men*, as persons of *plebeian* rank are called *bene Adam* *. "Whoever you are, and however illustrious by birth, or inflated with pride, or perhaps formidable on both accounts, your greatness is false, and when it is most blown up, is most like to burst; that is a sound and stable degree of honour to which God has destined his servants, whom you insult and deride. The height of your honour and vanishing glory, from the exaltation of which you look down upon me, will, if you desire I should courageously speak the truth, only render your future fall more grievous and fatal, which he, whose destruction you seek with such insatiable rage, sees indeed, but does not wish, nay, he rather wishes that this misery may be averted from you, and that by a return to the exercise of

* Accordingly the Latin renders it not *filii hominum*, but *filii virorum*.

your right mind, it may be totally prevented; and therefore he gives you this admonition, lest while you are deriding him, unexpected destruction should come upon you, and your laughter should prove of the *Sardonic* kind, which nothing can quiet till it end in death. You have indeed great strength and deep counsel, but these things are only the blandishments of your ruin, and the splendid prelude to that misery which is hovering over you. You have spent time enough, and alas! how much more than enough in giving chace to such vanities; at last regard the man who in the most disinterested manner, admonishes you of the most important truths."

How long will ye turn my glory into shame.] The *Septuagint* appears to have read these words something different from our copies, but the sense is nevertheless much the same*; and though the Psalmist, in the affair which he had in view, speaks only of a few, the words themselves have such an expressive dignity, and are in truth so unhappily extensive, that without doing any the least violence to them, they may be considered as an admonition to all mankind, *O ye sons of men, how long will ye love vanity and lies?* For indeed, what are all these things which we foolish mortals pursue, what such contention and ardour of spirit, but as an ancient expresses it, "Trifles that are but like the shadow of smoke†?" But we are to speak of this hereafter; in the mean time let us attend to the words before us, *How long will you turn my glory into shame?* The things which are the brightest ornaments of human nature, and which alone constitute its very glory, are holiness, piety and faith; and these are treated as if they were the most des-

* They render it, "How long are ye slow of heart." ἕως πότε βαρυκάρδιοι, and the Latins *usquequo gravi corde*, instead of *Kebudi lekelessech* they read *Kebudi leklessi*.

† φλίδονες ἅπαντα καπνοῦ σκιαί.

picable and ignominious things in the whole world. Among Christians, or those who are called by the name, it is the greatest of all scandals to be a Christian indeed; we have long since lost the true names of things; candid simplicity of manners is despised as rusticity; lively religion is called the delirious dream of superstitious notions; and gentleness, dullness and stupidity: while pride has usurped the name of magnanimity, and craft that of wisdom. Thus we turn true glory into shame, and shame into glory; and because few are able to discern what tends to their eternal happiness, they squander away the whole day of this short life in pursuing and catching at the false and fictitious forms of it; yea, they seek a lie, *lying vanity.* And they who heap up riches, seem to be wise both to themselves and others; but Oh! how far from it, and with how base a lie do they impose upon themselves! for these riches are spent upon gratifying their palate, and ministering in other respects to their luxury. Into how foul a gulf do they throw what they have laboured so eagerly to gain! Or if they hoard up their wealth, how soon do they pass over the property to their heirs? Men hunt after fame and vain-glory; and when they seem to have caught it, feed upon air, and become the slaves of all, even the meanest, for a thing of nought. And as for pleasure, who is so senseless as not to know how deceitful a lie it proves at last? It drives men into a weak frenzy, to run after the most trifling objects of pursuit, which fly from them like bees, who, if they are taken, yield but a drop of honey, and repay the spoil of it with a painful sting; a sting which alas reaches the very heart. Religion is a high sublime thing, royal, unconquerable, unwearied; but pleasure is low, servile, weak, and withering. Religion is neither attended with sickly disgust in the enjoyment, nor bitter repentance in the reflection; but what the world calls *pleasure* is attended with both. "Hear my young friends,

hear the divine voice of celestial wisdom calling you with fervent affection and a loud cry from the tractless ways of error and precipices of misery. *How long*, does she say, *how long will ye love vanity, and seek after leasing?* he that seeks me shall not be wearied in running hither and thither, but shall find me, sitting at his door and waiting admittance; and he who finds me need seek nothing else, unless he be one whom a life of real happiness cannot satisfy." Oh! that the indefatigable labour and industry with which men pursue flattering and uncertain enjoyments, may stir up your minds to exert at least an equal diligence in this sublime and most blessed pursuit; for if, as St. *Chrysostom* speaks, it may seem indecent for me to press you farther to such an attachment to these objects as they require, it will be a lovely thing to give it without farther solicitation. But to proceed,

How long will you love vanity, and seek after leasing.] Can any one deny that this is the character of almost every thing that is to be found in human life? Should a man proclaim this in every company with a loud voice, he would soon pass for a lunatic; but certainly he might reproach them with the general madness which reigns among mankind, not only among the vulgar that he meets with in the streets, but the philosophers disputing in the school, the counsellors pleading in our courts of judicature, yea the senators and nobles that sit in the most august assembly. And Oh! how happy are they, of whatever order, whom the hand of God draws out of the crowd, and turns their minds from these various, lying and transitory vanities, to the pursuit of true and lasting good. Happy they whom he by a wonderful interposition of grace in their favour, *sets apart as dear to himself.* Which leads to the 3d verse.

Ver. 3. *But know that the Lord hath set apart him that is godly for himself, the Lord will hear me when I call unto him.*

THE prophet had this great support both of his faith and of his kingdom, the immutable and unshaken decree of the supreme and universal King, and it is the firm establishment of *David's* infinitely greater Son in his throne and kingdom, *I will declare the decree*[p]. In this verse, and there, we may most properly understand it of both, more immediately of *David* as the type, but chiefly and in its consummate sense, as referring to Christ the Lord, and having its full end and accomplishment in his endless and eternal kingdom. He is, by way of eminence, *God's holy one, holy, and harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners*[q]. And whoever they are who endeavour to oppose themselves to the divine purposes, betray the most desperate madness, and on whatever strength or counsel they depend in the enterprize, like waves dashed against the solid rock, they shall be broken in pieces, by what they vainly attempt to break. And on this basis does the whole safety of the whole church rest, and that of all God's saints, of all those *whom he sets apart for himself*, and as the form of the original here has been thought to imply, wonderfully separates as his peculiar people and treasure, the sacred charge of Christ the great shepherd and bishop of souls, which all the powers of earth and gates of hell shall in vain attempt to wrest from him. And this is the confidence on which believers should repose themselves. They never trust to themselves or their own strength or virtues, but they often redouble that cry, *Thou Lord art my rock and my fortress, and my deliverer. And blessed O Lord is the man who trusteth in thee*[r], who must previously and necessarily despair first of himself, as considered in him-

[p] Psal. ii. 7 [q] Heb. vii. 26. [r] Psal. xviii. 2.—xxxiv. 8.

self alone, as the great apostle says, *When I am weak, then am I strongest of all*[a]. According to that lively and just expression, "Faith which is endangered in security, is secure in danger *."

The Psalmist adds, *the Lord will hear me when I call.*] From the divine decree and favour, he promises not to himself an entire freedom from all and every attempt of his enemies, but assures himself that God will be present in the midst of his calamities, present and propitious, not to the indolent and drowsy soul, but to that which solicits his assistance by prayer, and this is the determination of every godly man, whom the Lord *has set apart for himself*, that he will call upon God without ceasing; and, that if any unusual difficulty arise, he will call upon him more fervently. Thence it appears, how entirely all our safety depends upon prayer: yet all our prayers, and those of the whole church, are sustained by those prayers of our great King and Priest, as *Augustin* says in reference to that known story in the Evangelists, *because the waves rise, the ship may be tossed, but because Christ prays, it cannot be sunk* †.

Ver. 4. *Stand in awe and sin not, commune with your own heart on your bed, and be still.* Selah.

Oh most friendly counsel! which is here offered to enemies, this is indeed overcoming hatred and injury with the very best of favours; by far the most noble kind of victory. A sublime and heavenly mind, like the upper region of the world, is not only itself always calm and serene, as being inaccessible to every breath of injury and turbulent impression, but it also continually sheds down its benign influences without distinction on all below

[a] 2 Cor. xii. 10.

* Fides quæ in securitate periclitatur, in periculis secura est.

† Quia insurgunt fluctus, potest turbari navicula, sed quia Christus orat, non potest mergi.

it, *on the evil and the good, the just and the unjust. Stand in awe*; the *Hebrew* and *Greek* have it, *be ye moved;* and as this emotion may arise, either from anger, fear, or any other affection of the mind, the *Septuagint* renders it, *be angry and sin not*, a maxim which Paul finding to his purpose, inserts in his epistle to the *Ephesians*[m]. Nevertheless the author of this psalm here seems more apparently to demand their fear rather than their anger, and accordingly the *Targum* explain it, *fear him*, i. e. *God, and sin not.* Kimchi, *fear the Lord who has chosen me king.* And Abenezra, *fear God and despise not my glory, for that great King will require the derision at the hand of the deriders.*

The passions are the inmost wheels of this machine, which we call man, whose motions all the rest of life follows, and all the errors of this career of ours proceed from their irregularity. Of so great importance is it, that every one rightly determine what he should desire, and hope, and fear. And from the time that man lost the ingenuity of his disposition, and became like a wild ass-colt, the use of fear is become very great. It is true that they who are born again, and who really are the sons of God, are especially led by the sweet and noble energy of this divine principle, and therefore it is the saying of the beloved apostle, *that perfect love*, or charity, *casteth out fear*[n]. But as the generality of mankind are either entirely destitute of this divine love, or possess it only in a very low and imperfect degree, so it is certain, that with regard to him, whose heart is most entirely fired with this celestial flame, we may understand the words as signifying, that in such an one this great and fervent love does indeed cast out all despairings, and diffident fears, but not that of a pious and reverential awe. Alas! most of us under pretence of avoiding a servile terror, perversely shake off the bonds of holy and

[m] Eph. iv. 26. [n] 1 John iv. 18.

ingenuous fear, and become obstinate and self-willed; whereas when we look into the word of God, we shall find the holiest men there tremble in the divine presence, and sometimes acknowledge even great horror of mind. *My flesh trembleth for fear of thee, and I am afraid of thy judgments*[h]. *Destruction from God was a terror to me, and because of his excellency I could not endure*[i]. In this sense, as *David* declares, *The fear of the Lord is clean, and endureth for ever*[k], endures in the most happy agreement with perfect love. Nor is it only to remain in spirits that inhabit flesh, but in all the angelic choirs, pure and happy as they are. Nay, the profound reverence of that eternal and tremendous majesty flourishes and reigns most of all there, for in proportion to the degree in which the knowledge is clearer, and vision more distinct, is the veneration and the fear more deep and humble. How reasonable then must it be, that mortal men, beset with sore temptations and dangers, should, as *Hezekiah* expresseth it, *walk softly and tremble* before that infinite Majesty, at *whose voice the earth is shaken*, and at whose *rebuke the pillars of heaven are moved.* With great propriety did one of the ancients say "Fear is the first swadling band of new-born wisdom *," or as the scripture expresses it, *The fear of the Lord is the beginning of Wisdom.* It is observed that the original word there made use of, signifies both the *beginning* and the *top*, and in both senses it is most true: the author just mentioned admirably says, "Do they call such a one unlearned? It is the only wisdom I know to fear God, it is the beginning of wisdom and the end of all discourse, as *Solomon* describes it, it is indeed the τὸ πᾶν, the whole matter, *the whole concern of man*, and it is *all in all; fear God* †." And elsewhere he adds, "This fear is

[h] Psal. cxix. 120. [i] Job xxxi 23. [k] Psal. xix. 9.

* Ὁ φόβος πρῶτον της σοφίας ουπάργανον. GREG. NAZ.

† Ἀπαίδευτον ὀνομάσωσι; μίαν σοφίαν οἶδα, τὸ φοβεῖσθαι Θεὸν. ἀρχὴ τε γαρ σοφίας, φόβος κυρίου. καὶ τέλος λόγου, τὸ πᾶν ἄκουε, ἴφη Σολομων, τον Θεὸν φοβοῦ. GREG. NAZ. OR. 28.

most salutary to men, but at the same time most rare, superlatively so *." And once more, "It is, (says he) the greatest of all good things to fear God, and the ungodly in falling from it shall not be permitted long to continue in the abuse of his own folly †." Well therefore is it here added, *Sin not.* This fear is the water of the sanctuary, to quench all the flames of concupiscence, this (says *Bernard*) *is the arrow that strikes through all the desires of the flesh.* Hence arose *Abraham's* fear and apprehension among strangers, *Surely, says he, the fear of God is not in this place* [q].

But in order to produce this fear, it is necessary that we should have right conceptions of God, that nothing impure can please him, because he is holiness itself, that nothing secret can be concealed from him, because he is light, nor can any sinner surely be mad enough to hope he shall escape the long hand of this righteous Judge and supreme King, whose power is immense, and who cannot be a *respecter of persons.* What evil then can escape with impunity? *Thou, O Lord, thou only art to be feared, and who can stand before thee when once thou art angry* [r]*?*

Commune with your own heart.] Or as some render it, *examine yourselves.* Oh! how few do this! Men live abroad and are indeed strangers at home, the great mark of human madness, to delight in speaking and hearing of what concerns others, while no single person will attempt to descend into himself ‡. Yet this faculty which we call reflection, is the peculiar privilege of human nature, and to be borne on wholly by external objects, is indeed brutal. And oh! what heaps of

* Φόβος δὲ θεῦ, ἀνθρώπων σωτήριος, σπάνιος δὲ, σπανιώταλος.

† Ἀγαθόνγε μὲν μέγιστον ἐυλαβεῖσθαι θεὸν. ἔπειρ ἀσεβὴς ἐκπεσὼν ἐ πολὺν χρόνον τῆ ἑαυτῦ μορία καταχρήσεται.

[q] Gen. xx. 11. [r] Psalm lxxvi. 7.

‡ Ut nemo in sese tentat descendere, nemo.

disorder, what odious filthiness must there necessarily be in a breast which is never looked into, and cleansed out? Dear youths, if amidst all your other studies, you do not learn to converse and commune with your own selves, whatever you know, or rather, whatever you imagine you know, I would not purchase it at the expence of a straw.

On your bed.] Or as some would render it, *in your secret chambers*, when free from the noise of the world, and hurries of their daily business. An ancient said, "The reflections of the night are deepest *." And it has been observed, that *David* in the xix Psalm, ascribes speech to the day, and wisdom to the silent night. It is an excellent advice of *Pythagoras*, and the verses that contain it, do indeed deserve to be called *golden*, "That we should not allow ourselves to go to sleep, till we have seriously revolved the actions of the day, and asked ourselves, What have I done amiss? What good have I done, or neglected to do? that so we may reprove ourselves for what has been wrong, and take the comfort of what has been as it ought †."

And be still.] This refers not so much to the tongue as to the mind, for what does an external silence signify, if the inward affections be turbulent? A sedate and composed mind is necessary in

* Βαθυτέραι γαρ νυκτὸς φρένες.

† The original, with Mr. Rowe's translation and paraphrase, is as follows.

Μὴ δ' ὕπνον μαλακοῖσιν ἐπ' ὄμμασι προσδέξασθαι,
Πρὶ των ἡμερινῶν ἔργων τρὶς ἕκαστον ἐπελθεῖν.
Πῆ παρέβην; τί δ' ἔρεξα; τί μοι δέον οὐκ ἐτελέσθη;
Ἀρξάμενος δ' απο πρωτῆς ἐπεξίθι καὶ μετέπειτα,
Δεινὰ μεν ἐκπρήξας, ἐπιπλήσσεο χρηστά δε, τέρπου.

Let not the stealing god of sleep surprize,
Nor creep in slumbers on thy weary eyes,
Ere every action of the former day
Strictly thou dost and righteously survey.
With reverence at thy own tribunal stand,
And answer justly to thy own demand,

order to know ourselves and know God. As it is hinted in Psalm xlvi. *Be still, and know that I am God.* Such wisdom both deserves and demands a vacant soul, it will not, as it were, thrust itself into a corner, nor inhabit a polluted or unquiet breast. God was not *in the whirlwind, nor the fire, but in the still small voice* [m]. The Holy Spirit is peaceful and pacific, but wicked men are turbulent and stormy, driven *like the sea*, whose waves are tossed about, and *throw up continually mire and dirt.* Impurity is the inseparable attendant of this inquietude, *but the wisdom that is from above, is first pure, then peaceable,* ἁγνή, ἔπειτα εἰρηνική, *pacific* [n], and in that blessed country to which it teaches us to aspire, there is the most perfect and everlasting cohabitation of purity and peace.

Ver. 5. *Offer the sacrifices of Righteousness, and put your trust in the Lord.*

THE mind of man is earthly, I say, οἵοι νῦν βροτοί εἰσι, *as mortals now are,* entangled in the folds of flesh and sense; it knows not how to rise to things celestial and divine: and when it is stimulated with some sense of the eternal Deity, and the worship due to him, it generally slides into some lighter offices and external rites, how carelessly soever performed, and there it rests. *But God is a spirit,* and requires to be *worshipped in spirit and in truth;*

Where have I been? In what have I transgress'd?
What good or ill has this day's life express'd?
Where have I fail'd in what I ought to do?
In what to God, to man, or to myself I owe?
Enquire severe, whate'er from first to last,
From morning's dawn till ev'ning's gloom has past.
If evil were thy deeds, repenting mourn,
And let thy soul with strong remorse be torn.
If good, the good with peace of mind repay,
And to thy secret self with pleasure say
Rejoice my heart, for all went well to-day

[m] 1 Kings xix. 12. [n] James iii. 17.

and the solemn visible sacrifices, when instituted by the command of Him the great invisible, are to be presented by every pious person with all humble and obedient regard: yet the chief labour is to be employed on the pure, sublime worship and obedience of the mind. The heathen philosophers objected to the primitive Christians, that they did not sacrifice; to which some of the early apologists reply thus, "The former and parent of the whole universe has no need of incense and of blood. The greatest sacrifice we can present to him is to know who has *stretched out the heavens*, who has *laid the foundations of the earth*, who has *gathered together the waters into the hollow of the sea*, and divided the light from the darkness, formed the whole animal world and the human species, and who governs them all by his nod, and that acknowledging him such an immense and omnipotent being, we should *lift up pure and holy hands to him*[*]." And the truth of this sentiment has generally prevailed throughout all ages, and even in the Jewish church, while the obligation to sacrifice did yet continue, with all the laborious institution of external worship; holiness and righteousness, and integrity of heart and life, were acknowledged to be the most essential parts of religion, though, alas! while all confessed it in words, there were very few that set themselves seriously to perform it. Hence arose the necessity of inculcating this lesson so frequently[a], and what is there taught at large, is here hinted in this short clause. Since the temple has been demolished, and the priests with their sacrifices have ceased, the *Jews* themselves have instituted in the place of this the offering of the lip, with the commemoration only of ancient sacrifice; persuaded that this would be equally effectual, and have appointed three daily lessons, calling him, who diligently recites them, a son of eternal life.

[*] Athenagoras. [a] Psalm l.—Isa. i. xxix. &c.

Offer the sacrifices of righteousness.] It is no improbable conjecture of some commentators, that *David* here refers to the confidence and boast of some of *Saul's* courtiers in those sacrifices, and that solemn worship from which their envy had perhaps banished him. It is certainly much easier to sacrifice a ram, or a bullock, than to slay anger or ambition, easier indeed to heap up whole hecatombs of animals, than to resign one brutal affection or concupiscence, yea, easier to present all our goods than ourselves as *living sacrifices*, though that is undoubtedly our *reasonable service.* The *Mosaic* sacrifices, though instituted by God, borrowed all their value from that evening victim which was to be slain in the end of the world, who was himself the sacrifice and the altar, and the one only *High Priest after the order of Melchizedec;* who yet instituted a perpetual succession of those who should *be a royal priesthood*, the whole series of which priests in their succeeding generations are daily offering to God *the Father of spirits*, the pure and spiritual sacrifice of righteousness, most acceptable to him, as passing through the hand of that great High Priest, who incessantly ministers in that high and holy sanctuary; as *Bernard* excellently speaks*, "Nothing, Lord, that is thine can suffice me without thyself, nor can any thing that is mine without myself be pleasing to thee." And *Augustin* †, "Let thy fire entirely consume me, so that nothing of me may remain to myself." And this one holocaust comprehends all the sacrifices of righteousness; the understanding, the love, all the affections and faculties of the soul, and organs of our bodies; all our words, actions and thoughts, prayers and vows, hymns and thanksgivings, piety, modesty, charity, and the whole choir of virtues, exercised in a diligent and harmonious observance of all his

* Nec mihi tua sufficiunt sine te, nec tibi placent mea sine me.

† Totum me consumat ignis tuus, nihil mei remaneat mihi.

precepts. These are victims and perfumes of incense worthy so pure a deity, *who eats not the flesh of bulls, nor drinks the blood of goats; who if he were hungry would not ask us, since all the beasts of the forest are his, and the cattle upon a thousand hills. Offer unto God thanksgivings, and pay thy vows unto the Most High. For he that offereth praise glorifies him, and to him that orders his conversation aright, will he shew the salvation of God.*

Even the heathen philosophers and poets saw and taught, that these sacrifices of a pious mind were most fit for a rational worshipper, and must be most fit for God, to whom they are addressed. "Strange indeed would it be, says *Socrates*, if the Gods should look to the gift and sacrifice, and not to the soul." And passages of *Horace* * and *Persius* † to this purpose are so well known, that they need not be repeated. The language of the son of *Sirach* is also agreeable to it [m]. *He that keepeth the law bringeth offerings enough, he that taketh heed to the commandment offereth a peace offering. He that requiteth a good turn offereth fine flour, and he that gives alms sacrificeth praise. To depart from wickedness is a thing pleasing to the Lord, and to forsake unrighteousness is a propitiation.*

And put your trust in the Lord.] This very trust with which the mind reposes itself upon God, is both the great consolation of a good man, and the great sacrifice of piety and righteousness. The faith of *Abraham* was a sacrifice much dearer to God, not only than the ram which he actually

* Immunis aram si tetigit manus:
Non sumptuosâ blandior hostiâ,
Mollibit aversos Penateis
Farre pio, & saliente micâ.

† Compositum jus fasque animi, sanctosque recessus
Mentis, & incoctum generoso pectus honesto.
Hæc cedo ut admoveam templis, & farre litabo.

[m] Eccl. xxxv. 1, 3.

offered, but even than his dearest son whom he had brought to the altar. *He was strong in faith*, says the apostle, *and so he gave glory to God.* And again, only they who offer the sacrifice of righteousness, can rely upon him with a true and solid confidence. Not that these sacrifices, though the choicest and best of all, can pretend to any merit, but because they are the most genuine signs and most certain seals of a soul in covenant with God: so that there is indeed a mutual signing; God offering the dearest pledges of his favour to us, and we in like manner, as is most fit, rendering all that we have, and all that we are, to him, with the most humble and grateful heart; and certainly this union and perpetual undivided friendship, is the true ευθυμία of the holy soul, that temperature which alone can give it solid tranquillity and felicity, as it follows presently after in this Psalm.

Ver. 6. *There be many that say, Who will shew us any good? Lord lift up the light of thy countenance upon us.*

THE Psalmist now returns to himself, and his own affairs, and having sufficiently admonished his enemies concerning the true and only good, enforces his exhortation by his example, that if they thought fit, they might follow it; for this is the most efficacious manner of teaching. But if they would not, that he might at least enjoy the benefit of his own counsel, and wrapping himself up in his own happiness, might, from that eminence, look down upon all the vain and wretched pursuits of the mad vulgar. Like drunken men, they reel and stagger from place to place; they often fall down upon their face, and strike and dash themselves against what they desired to embrace. Through all their life with an unstable pace, they catch at flying forms of good; and after all their falls and

their bruises, they cry out again and again, *Who will shew us any good?* And when they behold any new species or shadow of it, they immediately run to it. Nay perhaps so light and various are they in their pursuit, they return again to that in which they had been frequently deceived, and which they had as often abandoned. Rabbi *Solomon* paraphrases the words thus, "When *Israel* saw the nations prosperous, he said, Who will shew us a like prosperity? But *David* says, envy them not, we have a sublimer prosperity in the light of thy divine countenance." "That is good, says the great philosopher of the schools, which all pursue." The various affections and desires of the mind, are as the pulse and natural respiration; but certain internal principles, which not inwrought by nature, are afterwards received and deeply engraved upon the heart, are the springs of that motion; our different opinions of different things do nevertheless all meet in this, *That we would see good.* But they who select from the various objects that present themselves, a suitable, compleat and substantial good, and neglecting every thing else, bend all their pursuits to that, are the only wise and happy men.

This the Psalmist professes he did, and freely invites all that pleased to join and take a part with him in these desires and pursuits, well knowing that the happiness was abundantly sufficient for many, for all that would apply themselves to it, and such as could not at all be diminished by being imparted; for it was indeed the αὐτάρκες καλὸν, the self-sufficient and all-sufficient good, which was one of the titles that some of the wiser heathens gave their *Jupiter*; but he of whom we speak is *the living and the true God;* nor is there any other good whatsoever adequate to the human mind; and what we say of his infinite sufficiency, is most aptly signified by this adumbration which the Psalmist uses, I say *by the adumbration of light;* nor do I think

fit to correct it as an incongruous expression, for *light* is indeed as it were the *shadow of God*, and that fulness of supreme good which is in him, is in some degree shadowed out by light, which entirely illustrates with the full stream of its rays all who behold it, and is not broke into little fragments, to be sparingly distributed to each. Many seek *many things*, they pursue any good with uncertain and ignorant desires, but we have fixed upon the one petition we should insist upon, for in this one is all, *Lord lift up the light of thy countenance upon us.* Oh! rich, grand and incomparable desire? without this all the proudest palaces of monarchs are gloomy caverns, dark as hell, and all the riches of all the earth mere indigence. This is the proper light of the intellectual world, and it *puts gladness into the heart*, as it follows.

Ver. 7. *Thou hast put gladness into my heart more than in the time that their corn and their wine increased.*

Gladness into my heart.] To which the gross delights of earthly things cannot reach: they stick as it were before the threshold. *Corn and wine* are only the refreshment of these mean frail earthly bodies, and the support of this corporeal and terrene life, but have nothing συγγενὶς congenial with and a-kin to the heaven-born spirit. It is said indeed that *bread strengthens man's heart*, and *wine makes it glad:* but the heart there spoken of is that which is the spring of animal life and natural spirit; whereas, to that heart which holds the preference in human nature, which may therefore be called the ἡγεμονικὴ, *the governing part*, there is nothing which gives light and gladness, beneath the eternal *Father of lights and of spirits.* He cherishes the languishing soul with the rays of his love, and satisfies it with the consolations of his spirit, as with a kind of heavenly *nectar* or *nepenthe*, that while it confides in his safety, lays all

its cares and fears asleep, and lulls it into deep peace, and calm sweet repose, without which, if the mind be a little agitated, no gentle breeze of harmony, no melody of birds or harp can bring on the pleasing slumber, during which, nevertheless, the heart awakes. Oh happy man who betakes his whole soul to God, and does not only chuse him above all, but in the place of all, waiting only on him! Happy man who having been chosen by him with preventing love, and unmerited benignity, embraces his ample all-sufficient Creator for his inheritance, and his wealth, often repeating with sacred transport, *Deus meus & omnia!* my God and my all! This is the man that has enough; and therefore, to allude to the words of the poet, "He is not disquieted by the raging of the sea, nor any severity of the seasons, whatever stars may rise and set *."

God fixes his gracious dwelling in the pure and holy soul, which has learned to despise the vanity of riches, and makes it calm in the midst of hurries, and secure in the deepest solicitudes. And not merely to find, but even to seek after God, is better to such a soul, inexpressibly better than to possess the richest treasure, the most extensive empire, or to have all the variety of sensual pleasures waiting upon its beck.

I remember to have read of some military officers, who crossing the *Nile*, in the same boat with the two *Macarii* of *Egypt*, said to them, in allusion to their name, "You are indeed happy who laugh at the world." Yes, said they, it is evident that we are happy, not merely in name but in reality, but you are unhappy whom the world derides, as poor creatures whom it sees entangled in its snares.

* ——— Neque
Tumultuosum sollicitat mare,
Nec sævus Arcturi cadentis
Impetus, aut orientis hœdi.
HOR. lib. 3. OD. 1.

St. *Augustine* also quotes from *Politian* a similar example of a *Pretorian* Soldier, who walking out with his comrade, found in a cottage into which he accidentally came, a book containing the life of the hermit *Anthony*, and when he had read a little in it, looking upon his friend, said, "To what are we taking so much pains to arrive? what do we seek? for what do we go through the fatigues of a military life? the highest of our hopes at court must be, to share some extraordinary degree of the emperor's favour; and how frail and dangerous a situation is that? and through how many other previous dangers must we pass to it? and how soon will all the advantages we can hope from it be over? But I may this moment, if I please, become the friend and favourite of God." And he had no sooner uttered these words, than they both resolved upon quitting the world, that they might give up all the remainder of their days to religion.

Holy men in former ages did wonders in conquering the world and themselves; but we, unhappy degenerate and drowsy creatures as we are, blush to hear that they did what we cannot or will not do. We are indeed inclined to disbelieve the facts, and rather chuse to deny their virtues, than to confess our own indolence and cowardice.

MEDITATIONS

ON

PSALM XXXII.

VER. 1. *Blessed is the man whose transgression is forgiven and whose sin is covered.*

OH! the pure, the overflowing, the incomparably sweet fountain of scripture!

"Hence light we draw, and fill the sacred cup *."

Whereas the springs of philosophy in human affairs, are not very clear, and in divine they are quite turbid and muddy; which one of the greatest orators and philosophers among them all freely confesses. "I think, says he, we are not only blind to true wisdom, but are very dull and slow of apprehension even in those things which seem to be discerned and understood †." Nor is this to be wondered at; for there would be little difference between things human and divine, if the dim eye of our reason were sufficient to discover their secrets. One of the ancients excellently says, "If you examine things ever so accurately, you will never be able to discover them if God keeps them vailed ‡."

It would be a vain and ridiculous labour to light up a great number of lanthorns and torches, and go out and look for the sun in the night; but when the appointed hour of morning comes, he rises, as

* Hinc lucem haurire est & pocula sacra.

† Mihi non modò ad sapientiam cæci videmur, sed ad ea ipsa, quæ aliqua ex parte cerni videantur, hebetes & obtusi. SEN.

‡ Ἀλλ' ὑ γαρ ἂν τὰ θεῖα κρύπτοντος θεῦ
Μαθοῖς ἂν οὐδ' εἰ πανθ' ὑπεξέλθοις σκοπῶν. SOPH.

of his own accord, and freely manifests himself by his own lustre, to every beholder. The wisest of the heathens undertook to find out the supreme Being, and the supreme good; but wandering through the devious ways of multiplied errors, they could attain to neither: nor was it the least of their errors, that they sought them as two different things, when it is most certain that both are united in one: for it is the only and ultimate happiness of man to be united to that first and supreme being and good, from which he drew his original. But since there has so sad a distance and disagreement arisen between God and man, by our deplorable apostacy from him, there could not be the least hope of attaining that union, did not infinite goodness and mercy propose the full and free pardon of our offences: so that the true determination of this grand question about happiness, is evidently that, *Blessed and happy is that man whose transgression is forgiven, and whose sin is covered.* Innocence was the first means of obtaining happiness; which being once violated, the only plank that can save us after our shipwreck, is remission and repentance; which two things the whole scripture assures us, that the divine wisdom has so connected, as with an adamantine band. And this Psalm which is now before us, is a signal declaration of it, which since it inculcates so grand a topic of religion, κυρίαν δόξαν, may well be stiled as it is *Maschil, a lesson of instruction:* for as St. *Augustine* well observes, "That is instruction indeed, which teaches us that man is not saved by the merits of his works, but by the grace of God *."

Blessed.] Or O! blessed man! or O! the Felicities of that Man! to denote the most supreme and perfect blessedness †. He only has attained

* Quâ intelligitur non meritis operum, sed Dei gratiâ hominem liberari.

† As the Elephant, to denote its vast bulk, is spoken of in the plural number, Behemoth.

to compleat felicity, whose numerous debts are all remitted, though far from being able to pay them, he could not so much as reckon them up; and blessed is he that knows it, as the proverb is, "No man is happy but he who thinks himself so*."

The man whose iniquity is forgiven.] as the word is *nesevi*, it might be rendered, *Blessed is the man who is eased of the heavy burden of his sin.* A burden indeed too heavy for the strongest man upon earth; a burden so dreadfully great, that God's angels are not able to stand under it; for many of the chief of them were pressed down to hell by it, and can rise no more. But though no giant on earth or in heaven could bear it, a lamb subjected himself to it: but it was a *Lamb without blemish and without spot*, burdened with no load of his own sin, nor stained with the least spot of pollution, *the Lamb of God, the Son of God*, who is himself God, is he ὁ αἴρων τὴν ἁμαρτίαν τοῦ κόσμου, who takes away all the sins of the world, as one sin, taking the burden upon himself, he bears it and carries it away.

Covered.] That sinners may more clearly apprehend, and more easily and firmly believe a thing which seems so difficult to admit, as the free and full remission of sin; it is painted out by various beautiful expressions and figures in the sacred scriptures, *washing, cleansing, blotting out, scattering like a cloud, entirely forgetting, casting into the bottom of the sea*, and here by that of *taking away and covering;* and by that phrase which explains both, of *not imputing* them, and this expression of *covering* them, is with great propriety added to the former phrase of lightning the sinner of the burden of them; and that there may be no fear of their returning again, or coming into sight; when God has not only taken the heavy load from our shoulders, but for ever hidden it from his own eyes,

* Non est beatus qui se non putat.

and the vail of mercy has taken it away; that great covering of divine love, which is large enough to overspread so many and so great offences. Thus it does as it were turn away the penetrating eye of his justice, which the most secret enquiry could not elude, did not he himself in pity voluntarily avert it.

But you will know what is our *Propitiatory*, what the covering of the mercy-seat, even Jesus who was typified by that *Caporeth* in the temple, which the *Septuagint* render ἱλαστήριον ἐπίθεμα, a *propitiatory covering;* by which title our great Redeemer is marked out[m], as the same *Hebrew* word *Caphar* signifies both to *cover* and *to expiate* *. But that the thing may be more evident and certain, the thought is repeated again in the second verse.

Ver. 2. *Blessed is the man to whom the Lord imputeth not iniquity, and in whose spirit there is no guile.*

Aben-Ezra paraphrases it, *of whose sins God does not think*, does not regard them, so as to bring them into judgment; reckoning them as if they were not, ὃ μὴ λογιζεται, *don't count or calculate them, or charge them to account;* don't require for them the debt of punishment. To us the remission is entirely free, our sponsor having taken upon him the whole business of paying the ransom. His suffering is our impunity, his bond our freedom, and his chastisement our peace; and therefore the prophet says, *The chastisement of our peace was upon*

[m] Rom. iii. 25.

* It is observed the Hebrew word *Eschol haccopher*, which some render *a cluster of camphire*, Cant. i. 14. may with a little variation in the reading, i. e. reading it *Ish col haccapher*, be rendered, *a man of all kinds of redemption*, or *of all expiation*; so the *Targum* interprets it by expiation, and by the way some assert that this Psalm used to be sung on the day of expiation.

him, and by his stripes we are healed. Distracted creatures that we are, to indulge those sins which brought death upon our dear Redeemer, and to be so cold in our affections to that Redeemer who died for these sins!

This weighty sentence, of itself so admirable, *Paul* renders yet more illustrious, by inserting it into his reasonings on the topic of justification, as a celebrated testimony of that great article of our faith. *David*, says he, thus describeth the blessedness of that man, saying, *Blessed is he whose iniquities are forgiven.* So that this is *David's* opinion concerning true happiness; he says not, blessed are those who rule over kingdoms: blessed are those generals who are renowned for their martial bravery and success, though he himself had both these titles to boast of. It is not the encomiums of the greatest multitudes, nor the breath of popular applause, nor any other degree of human honour, which entitles a man to this character. It is not said, blessed is he who ploughs many thousand acres of land, or who has heaped together mountains of gold and silver; not he who has married a beautiful and rich woman, or, which in his age, or even now in these eastern countries, might be the case, he who was possessed of many such; nor blessed is he who understands the secrets of nature, or even the mysteries of religion: *But oh! happy man whose sins are pardoned, and to whom the Lord does not impute iniquity, and in whose spirit there is no guile!* whose breast is full, not of feigned repentance, but of a fervent love of holiness, and hatred of sin. This makes life happy, nay absolutely blessed: but alas! when we inculcate these things, we sing to the deaf. The ignorance and folly of mankind will not cease to pronounce the proud and the covetous happy, and those who triumph in successful wickedness; and who, in chace of these lying shadows of happiness, destroy their days and their years, and their souls.

"Alas, says the wise *Roman*, how little do some who thirst most impatiently after glory, know what it is, or where it is to be sought*;" which is equally applicable to that true calm and serenity of mind which indeed all pursue, but yet few are able to attain. But as for us who enjoy the celestial instruction of this sacred volume, if we are ignorant of it, our ignorance is quite inexcusable, obstinate and affected, since we are wilfully blind in the clearest and most refulgent light. This points out that good which can compleatly fill all the most extended capacities of the human soul, and which we generally seek for in vain on all sides, catching at it where it is not to be found, but ever neglecting it where alone it is. But is it then possible at once to be solidly and compleatly happy? You have not merely the ideas of it, but the thing itself, not only clearly pointed out, but most freely offered, with divine munificence; so that if you do not obstinately reject the offer, it must be your own; and this happiness consists in returning to the favour and friendship of God, who most mercifully grants us the free pardon of all our sins, if we do with unfeigned repentance, and a heart free of all guile, not only humbly confess and lament them, but entirely forsake, and with implacable hatred, for ever renounce them. ὦ μάκαρ ἐυδαίμων τε καὶ ὄλβιος. All the names, all the variety of felicities, bliss and happiness are accumulated on that man who has known this *change of the right hand of the Most High* †, on whom this bright day of expiation and pardon has beamed. He easily looks down from on high on all the empty titles and false images of earthly happiness; and when he is bereaved of them all, yea, and beset on every side with what the world calls

* Quàm ignorant homines gloriæ cupidi, quæ ea sit aut quemadmodum petenda! *Sen.*

† Alluding to Psalm lxxvii. 10. where the Vulgate renders *Seuik* change, *mutatio dextræ Excelsi*, and several other Versions nearly agree with it.

misfortunes and afflictions, ceases not to be happy. In sorrow he is joyful, in poverty rich, and in chains free: when he seems buried deep, so that not one ray of the sun can reach him, he is surrounded with radiant lustre; when overwhelmed with ignominy, he glories; and in death itself he lives, he conquers, he triumphs. What can be heavy to that man, who is eased of the intolerable burden of sin? How animated was that saying of *Luther*, "Smite, Lord, smite, for thou hast absolved me from my sins*." Whose anger should he fear who knows that God is propitious to him, that supreme *king, whose wrath is indeed the messenger of death, but the light of his countenance is life;* who gladdens all by the rays of his favour, and by one smile disperses the darkest cloud, and calms the most turbulent tempest!

But, we must now observe the complication of a twofold good, in constituting this felicity; for we have two things here connected, as conspiring to make the person spoken of blessed: the free remission of sin, and the inward purification of the heart. This simplicity, ἀφελότης, is a most excellent part of purity, opposed to all wickedness and arts of deceit; and in common speech, that which is simple, and has no foreign mixture, is called *pure*. Pardon presents us as just and innocent before our judge, and that sanctity is not to be regarded, as constituting any part of our justifying righteousness before God, nor as only the condition or sign of our felicity, but truly and properly a part of it. Purity is the accomplishment of our felicity, begun on earth, and to be consummated in Heaven: that purity, I say, which is begun here, and shall there be consummated. But if any one think he can divide these two things, which the hand of God has joined by so inseparable a bond, it is a vain dream. Nay, by attempting to separate these two parts of happiness,

* Feri, Domine, feri; nam à peccatis absolvisti me.

he will in fact only exclude himself from the whole. Jesus, our victorious Saviour, has snatched us from the jaws of eternal death; but to be delivered from the cruel tyranny and bonds of sin, and to be brought into the blessed liberty of the sons of God, was another essential part of our redemption; and if any one does not embrace this with equal alacrity and delight as the other benefit, he is a wretched slave of the most mean and ignoble spirit; and being equally unworthy of both parts of this stupendous deliverance, he will justly forfeit and lose both. And this is the epidemical *Antinomianism* of the Christian world, because they who labour under it have nothing but the name of Christians; they gladly hear of the pardon of their sins, and the salvation of their souls, while they are averse to the doctrine of holiness and repentance. It is a disagreeable message, a *hard saying, and who can bear it?* But oh! the incomparable charms of holiness! to be desired not only for the sake of other benefits, which come in its train, but especially for itself: so that he who is not transported with a most ardent love to it, is blind, and deserves to be thrust into the mill, to tread that uncomfortable round, and to grind there; deserves to be a slave for ever, since he knows not how to use liberty when offered to him. Shall the Stoick say, "The servant of philosophy is truly free*;" and shall we scruple to assert the same concerning pure religion, and evangelical holiness? Now this freedom from guile, that fair simplicity, of which the Psalmist speaks, is deservedly reckoned among the chief endowments of a pure soul, and is here named instead of all the rest, as nothing is more like to that God who inspects the very heart, in nothing do we so much resemble him; and therefore it is most agreeable to him, because most like him. He is the most simple of all beings, and is

* Qui philosophiæ inservit, est verè liber.

indeed *truth itself*, and therefore he *desires truth in the inward parts*, and hates a *heart and a heart*, as the *Hebrew* phrase is to express those that are double-hearted. And how much our blessed Redeemer esteems this simplicity, we may learn from the earnestness with which he inculcates it upon his disciples, that they should be *simple as doves**. We may also learn it from the honourable testimony he bears to this character in *Nathaniel*, when he pronounces him, John i. 47. *an Israelite indeed, in whom there is no guile*, and especially from his own perfect example, as it is said of him, 1 Pet. ii. 22. *He did no sin, neither was guile found in his mouth*. Perhaps the Psalmist might the more willingly mention this virtue, as he reflected with penitential distress on his crafty and cruel attempt of covering that adultery which he had committed with the vail of murder. But however that was, it is certain that this guileless sincerity of heart holds the first rank in the graces that attend true repentance. It may be sometimes our duty to open our sins to men, by an ingenuous confession; but it is always our duty to do it to God; who promises to cover them only on this condition, that we do sincerely uncover them ourselves. But if we affect that which is his part, he will, to our unspeakable damage, do that which he had assigned to us. If we hide them, he will bring them into open light, and will discuss and examine each with the greater severity. "He, says *Ambrose*, who burdens himself, makes his error so much the lighter*." "In proportion to the degree, says *Tertullian* †, in which you are unwilling to spare yourself, God will spare you." But what madness is it to attempt to conceal any action from him, from whom, as *Thales*

* Mat. x. 16.

* Allevat errores ille qui se onerat.

† Quantum tibi non peperceris, tantum tibi parcet Deus.

wisely declares, "you cannot so much as conceal a thought *." But not now to insist upon the impossibility of a concealment, a wise man would not wish to cover his wounds and his disease from that physician, from whose skilful hand he might otherwise receive healing; and this is what the Psalmist presently after, for our instruction, confesses.

Ver. 3. *When I kept silence, my bones waxed old, through my roaring all the day long.*

WHILE he suppressed the ingenuous voice of confession, the continually encreasing weight of his calamity extorted from him a voice of roaring; "while I would not speak as it became a guilty man, I was compelled even to bellow like a beast †:" nevertheless this wild roaring did not move the divine compassion, nor atone his displeasure.

Ver. 4. *For day and night thine hand was heavy upon me, my moisture is turned into the drought of summer.*

HITHERTO that voice was wanting, to which the bowels of the Father always echo back, the voice of a Son full of reverence, and ready to confess his errors; without which cries and lamentations in misery are no more regarded in the sight of God, than the howling of dogs; according to that expression of Hosea vii. 14. *They have not cried to me with their heart, when they howled upon their beds.* A dog howls when he is hungry, or when he is lash-

* Ὃν οὐ λανθάνεις οὐδὲ διανοούμενος.

† Dum nolui loqui, ut hominem reum decet, mugire coactus sum ut brutum.

ed; but from a son when he is chastened, acknowledgments of his fault, and deprecations of his father's displeasure are expected; and when the son thus acknowledges his offence, and intreats for pardon, it is the part of a compassionate father to forgive, and to spare. Nor do we indeed confess our offences to our Father, as if he were not perfectly acquainted with them, but we fly to him who requires we should repent, that he may not shew us by punishment those things which we shun shewing to him by confession. "I confessed unto the Lord, says *Augustine*, to whom all the abyss of my sin and misery lay open; so that if I did not confess whatever was hidden in my heart, I should not hide myself from him, but him from me *."

Thy hand was heavy upon me.] That hand which when pressing is so heavy, when raising, is so sweet and powerful [b], and when scattering its blessings, so full and so ample [c]. He would not at first be humbled by the confession of his iniquity, and therefore he is humbled by the weight of the hand of God. Oh powerful hand! beyond all comparison more grievous than any other hand to press down, and more powerful to raise up. He who suppresses his sins without confessing them,

Vulnus alit venis, et cæco carpitur igne,
"Conceals an inward wound, and burns with secret fire."

Under the appearance of sparing he is indeed cruel to himself; and when he has drunk down iniquity, and keeps it within, and it is not covered by the divine forgiveness, it is like a poison which consumes the marrow in the midst of his bones, and dries up the vital moisture. It may perhaps occasion more

* Et tibi, domine, cujus oculis nuda abyssus, quid occultum esset in me si non confiterer, non me tibi absconderem, sed te mihi.

[b] Psalm xxxvii. 24. [c] Psalm civ. 28. cxlv. 16.

present pain to draw out the point of the weapon which sticks in the flesh; but to neglect it will occasion greater danger, and more future torment: nor will the dart fall out by his running hither and thither; but on the contrary, as the the poet expresses it with respect to the wounded deer, it fixes deeper and deeper *.

But the only healing herb that the sinner can find is true repentance and humble confession, not that which acknowledges sin in a few slight words, when it has hardly looked upon and known; but that which proceeds from a previous true and vivid compunction of soul, and is inseparably attended with renovation and purity of heart and life, and so as comprehending this, it is sometimes put for the whole of repentance [d]. *If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.* And so in the Psalm before us.

Ver. 5. *I acknowledged my sin unto thee, and my iniquity have I not hid. I said I will confess my transgression unto the Lord, and thou forgavest the iniquity of my sin. Selah.*

TRUE and genuine repentance hath eyes as it were on both sides, πρόσω καὶ ὀπίσω βλέπει; it looks back on sins already committed, to lament them; it looks forward, and humbly resolves no more to commit what it has lamented; and each of these is expressed by each of the words by which repentance is signified, μεταμέλεια and μετανοία, which words are therefore used promiscuously, both by the sacred writers and by others: so that the received difference be-

* ——Illa fugâ sylvas saltusque peragrat
Dyctæos, hæret lateri lethalis arundo.

[d] 1 John i. 9.

tween them seems to me to have little foundation; for *Phavorinus* interprets the word μετανοία, an anguish of soul, under a consciousness of having acted a foolish and absurd part, and the *Latin* has the same signification, if we will admit the judgment of *Gellius*, who seems to have been a very accurate critic in affairs of that nature. He observes, "We are said to repent of things, whether our own actions, or those of others, which have been performed by our advice or instigation, which do afterwards displease us; so that we change our judgment concerning them*." But we will wave all further concern about words; the thing itself demands our greatest attention. I entirely agree with him who said, "I had rather feel the inward working of repentance, than know the most accurate description and definition of it†." Yet how averse sinners are to this free though useful and salutary confession of sin, abundantly appears from this example of so great a man as the Psalmist, when taken in this unhappy snare; for he confesses that he lay long as senseless and stupid in that quagmire into which he was fallen, and that it was with difficulty that he was as it were racked into a confession, by such exquisite tortures both of body and mind. On the other hand, the gracious readiness of the father of mercies to grant pardon, is so much the more evident, as on the first word of confession that he uttered, or rather the first purpose that he formed in his mind, immediately the pardon, the full and free pardon, came down signed, as in the court of Heaven, *I said, I will confess, and thou forgavest.* O admirable clemency! it requires nothing but that the offender should plead guilty, and this not that it may

* Pœnitere tum dicere solemus, cùm quæ ipsi fecimus, aut quæ de nostra voluntate nostroque consilio facta sunt, ea nobis post incipiunt displicere, sententiamque in iis nostram demutamus.

† Malo sentire compunctionem, quàm scire ejus definitionem, *Thom. a Kempis, l.* 1. *c.* 1.

more freely punish, but more liberally forgive. He requires that we should condemn ourselves, that so he may absolve us.

Ver. 6. *For this shall every one that is godly pray unto thee, in a time when thou mayest be found; surely in the floods of great waters they shall not come nigh unto him.*

THIS is the joyful message, this is the great doctrine of the gospel, which opens the first door of hope to sinners; that God is capable of being appeased, yea that he is actually appeased; that he freely offers peace and favour to those who have deserted him, when they return to his obedience, that he runs forth to meet them, and to receive them with a most affectionate embrace; and having so importunately intreated our return, will not despise those who are treading back with prayers and tears the fatal path which their folly had chosen. This is what we so frequently read in scripture, that *the Lord is gracious and very merciful, slow to anger and ready to pardon.* If he were not such who could dare to approach him! But seeing he is such a God, who should refuse or delay his return! surely every rational and pious mind will without delay invoke so gentle and mild a Lord; *will pray to him while he is exorable,* or as the *Hebrew* expresses it, *in a time of finding;* for he who promises pardon does not promise to-morrow. There are the *tempora fandi,* certain times in which he may be spoken with, and a certain appointed day of pardon and of grace, which if a man, by stupid perverseness despise, or by sloth neglect, surely he is justly overwhelmed with eternal night and misery, and must necessarily perish by the deluge of divine wrath; since he has contemned and derided that ark of salvation which was prepared, and in which, whoever enters into it, shall be safe, while the world is perish-

ing. Though all be one unbounded sea, a sea without shore; yet as it is here said, the greatest inundation, *the floods of deep waters shall not come nigh unto him.* This the Psalmist exhorts those that have experienced it to teach, and determines himself so to retain it with deep attention, and firm faith in his own mind, as in the following verse.

Ver. 7. *Thou art my hiding place,* thou hast been, and wilt ever be so. *Thou hast surrounded,* and thou wilt surround *me with songs of deliverance,* even me who was so surrounded with clamours of sin. Where he further intimates, that songs of praise are perpetually to be offered to God our deliverer. And that these faithful admonitions and counsels may meet with greater attention and regard, he offers himself to us as a most benevolent teacher and leader.

Ver. 8, 9, 10, 11. *I will instruct thee, and teach thee in the way in which thou shalt go, &c.*] See to it, only that thou be tractable, and dost not with a brutal obstinacy and fierceness repel this friendly and wise counsel, as only capable of being governed by violence, like a mule or unbroken horse, which must be held in by bit and bridle. Such indeed are the greatest part of men, whom the philosophers with great severity indeed, but with too much justice, called, βεγενῆ ἀνδρόπρωρα, "Wild bulls with human faces."

But it is added, as the sum of all admonition, and the great axiom most worthy of regard, that *many sorrows shall be to the wicked,* the *Septuagint* render it, *many are the scourges of the sinner**; but *mercy shall embrace those that hope in the Lord.* And the Psalm concludes with this as the burthen of it, *rejoice in the Lord ye righteous, and*

* Πολλαὶ μαστιγες ἁμαρτωλῷ.

shout for joy all ye that are upright in heart. Truly, my dear friends*, I have nothing farther to wish for myself or you, than that we may heartily believe these things, for then it would be impossible, that we should not with open arms embrace true religion, and clasp it to our hearts; since nature teaches every one to desire happiness, and to fly from misery. So that *Epicurus* himself would teach us to lay hold on joy and pleasure, as the τὸ πρῶτον οἰκεῖον, or first and proper good. This therefore let us lay down as a certain principle, and ever adhere to it, that we may not like brute beasts, remain in subjection to the flesh, that safety and joy and all happiness is the property of him who is possessed of virtue, and that all virtue is comprehended in true piety; and let us remember what the prophet adds, (according to the Greek translators†), as the necessary consequence of this principle, that *to the wicked there can be no joy.*

* The word *Juvenes*, or my dear youths, occurs here and in several other places, as these lectures were delivered to a society of young theological students, but it did not seem necessary to make the translation so exactly literal.

† Οὐκ ἐστὶ χαίρειν τοῖς ἀσέβεσι.

MEDITATIONS

ON

PSALM CXXX.

VER 1. *Out of the depths have I cried unto thee, O Lord.*

IT is undoubtedly both an useful and pleasant employment to observe the emotions of great and heroic minds, in great and arduous affairs, but that mind only is truly great, and superior to the whole world, which does in the most placid manner subject itself to God, securely casting all its burdens and cares upon him; in all the uncertain alterations of human affairs, looking at his hand, and fixing its regard upon that alone. Such the royal prophet *David* declares himself every where to have been, and no where more evidently than in this Psalm, which seems to have been composed by him. He lifts up his head amidst surrounding waves, and directing his face and his voice to Heaven, he says, *Out of the depths O Lord do I cry unto thee.* For so I would render it, as he does not seem to express a past fact, but as the *Hebrew* idiom imports, a prayer which he was now actually presenting.

Out of the depths.] Being as it were immersed and overwhelmed in an abyss of misery and calamities. It is indeed the native lot of *Man*, to be *born to trouble, as the sparks*, (the children of the coal, as the original expression signifies), *to fly upward.*

Life and grief are congenial*; but men who are born again, seem as in a redoubled proportion, to be *twice born to trouble*; with so many and so great evils are they as it were loaden, beyond all other men, and that to such a degree, that they may seem as it were, sometimes to be oppressed with them. And if any think this is strange, surely as the apostle expresses it, *he cannot see afar off*, μυωπάζει, at best, he only looks at the surfaces of things, and cannot penetrate far into those depths. For even the philosophers themselves, untaught by divine revelation, investigated admirable reasons for such dispensations of Providence, and undertook in this respect boldly to plead the cause of God. "God (says the *Roman* sage) loves his own people truly, but he loves them severely; as the manner in which fathers express their love to their children, is generally very different from that of mothers, they order them to be called up early to their studies, and suffer them not to be idle in those days, when their usual business is interrupted; but sometimes put them on labouring till the sweat flows down, and sometimes by their discipline excite their tears; while the mother fondles them in her bosom, keeps them in the shade, and knows not how to consent that they should weep or grieve or labour. God bears the heart of a father to good men, and there is strength rather than tenderness in his love, they are therefore exercised with labours, sorrows, and losses, that they may grow robust: whereas, were they to be fattened by luxurious fare, and indulged in indolence, they would not only sink under fatigues, but be burdened with their own unwieldy bulk†." Pre-

* Ὡς ἄρα συγγενὴς ἐστὶ λύπη τῷ βιῷ.

† Verè suos amat et severè Deus. Multo aliter patres, aliter matres indulgent, illi liberos ad studia obeunda maturè excitari jubent, feriatis quoque diebus non patiuntur otiosos, et sæpe sudodorem illis, et interdum lachrymas excutiunt; at matres fovere in sinu, in umbra continere volunt; nunquam flere, nunquam tristari, nunquam laborare. Patrium habet Deus adversus bonos viros

sently after he quotes a remarkable saying of *Demetrius* the Cynic *, to this purpose, "He seems to be the unhappiest of mankind, who has never been exercised with adversity, as he cannot have had an opportunity of trying the strength of his own mind." To wish to pass life without it, is to be ignorant of one part of nature, so that I may pronounce thee to be miserable, if thou hast never been miserable. If thou hast past through life without ever struggling with an enemy, no one, not even thou thyself canst know whether thou art able to make any resistance; whereas in afflictions we experience, not so much what our own strength is, as what is the strength of God in us; and what the aid of divine grace is, which often bears us up under them to a surprising degree, and makes us joyful by a happy exit; so that we shall be able to say, *My God, my strength, and my deliverer.* Thus the church becomes conspicuous in the midst of the flames, like the burning bush, *through the good will of him that dwelt in it*, and when it seems to be overwhelmed with waters, God brings it out of them, cleansed and beautified, *mergas profundo, pulchrior exilit;* he plunges it in the deep, and it rises fairer than before.

We will not here maintain that paradox of the stoics, *That evils which happen to good men, are not to be called evils at all;* which however is capable of a very good sense, since religion teaches us, that the greatest evils are changed, and *work together for good;* which comes almost to the same thing, and perhaps was the true meaning of the stoics. Banishment and poverty are indeed evils in one sense, *i. e.* they have something hard and griev-

animum, et illos fortiùs amat; et operibus, doloribus, ac damnis exagitantur, ut verum colligant robur. Languent per inertiam saginata: nec labore tantùm, sed et mole, et ipso sui onere deficiunt, *Sen.*

* Nihil mihi videtur infelicius eo, cui nihil unquam evenerit adversi; non licuit illi se experiri.

ous in them; but when they fall on a good and brave man, they seem to lay aside the malignity of their nature, and become tame and gentle. The very sharpness of them excites and exercises virtue, by exciting they increase it, so that the root of faith shoots the stronger, and fixes the deeper, and thereby adds new strength to fortitude and patience; and as we see in this example before us, affliction does by a happy kind of necessity, drive the soul to confess its sin, to fly as it were to seek its refuge under the wing of the divine goodness, and to fix its hope upon God; and this is certainly one great advantage which the pious soul gains by adversity, that it calls away the affections from earth and earthly things, or rather tears them away, when obstinately adhering to them. It is necessary that they suffer such hardships as these, as one expresses it*, lest they should love this inconvenient stable, in which they are now obliged to lodge, as if it were their own house. It is necessary that they should perceive *that they are strangers and foreigners upon earth*, that they may more frequently, and with more ardent desire groan after that better country, and often repeat it, οἶκος φίλος, οἶκος ἄριστος, *dear home! most desirable home!* The children and heirs of the kingdom, must be weaned by wormwood, lest they should be so inchanted by the allurements of the flesh, and the poisonous sweetness of secular enjoyments, as to barter away the true and pure joy of their blessed hope, for this false polluted and deadly joy; and lest, dissolved in pleasure, the Heaven-born soul should be broke under the yoke of this pernicious flesh, the root of so many passions †. Lastly, we see how much vigour and vehemence affliction adds to prayer; for the divine psalmist, the deeper he sinks, cries to God in

* Expedit omnino ut hîc dura experiantur, ne stabulum ament pro domo sua.

† Σαρξ ὀλόη, παθέων ῥίζαπολυχιδέων.

so much the louder accents, *out of the deeps have I cried.*

This prayer contains those precious virtues, which, in a grateful temperature, render every prayer acceptable to God, faith, fervour and humility. Faith, in that he prays out of *the deeps:* fervour, in that *he cries;* and both again expressed in the next word; faith, as in the midst of surrounding calamities he does not despair of redress; fervour, as he urges it with repeated importunity, and the same word uttered again and again. And to compleat all, humility expresses itself in what follows, where he speaks as one that felt himself sinking, as one who was plunged in a sea of iniquities, as well as calamities; and acknowledges he was so overwhelmed with them, as to be unable to stand, unless supported by pure mercy and grace. *If thou, Lord, shouldest mark iniquities, who shall stand?* Thus here again, faith manifests itself more clearly, together with its kindred affections of hope and charity, which, like three graces, join their hands, and by an inseparable union support each other. You have faith in the 4th verse, *there is forgiveness with thee;* hope in the 5th, *I wait for the Lord, my soul doth wait, and in thy word do I hope.* Charity in the 7th and 8th, where he does in a most benevolent manner invite all *Israel* to a communion of the same faith and hope; and in order to confirm them more abundantly, does in a most animated manner proclaim the riches of the divine benignity: such is the composition of this excellent prayer, which thus compounded, like a pillar of *aromatic* smoke, from myrrh, frankincense, and every other most fragrant perfume, ascends grateful to the throne of God. And this you may take instead of the *analysis* of the remaining verses, which to handle by a more minute dissection of words, and to cloath in the trite phrases of the schools, to speak freely, would be as barren and useless as it is easy and puerile: and indeed I cannot but form the same

judgment of the common way of catching at a multitude of observations from any scripture, and of pressing it with violence, as if remarks were to be estimated by number rather than weight, propriety and use. But here let every one follow his own genius and taste; for we are willing to give the liberty we take, *Veniam damus petimusque vicissim.*

Out of the depths.] O! the immortal power of divine faith, which lives and breathes in the midst of the waves, in which it may be plunged, but cannot be sunk under any of the hugest billows; but raises itself, and the soul in which it resides, and emerges and swims above all, φελλὸς ὡς ἀβάπτιστος, (like cork which will still be above water) having this in common with that divine love, of which *Solomon* speaks in his *Song*, that *many waters cannot quench it.* Whatever great things the *stoics* may speak of their wise men, and whatever all philosophy may say of fortitude, it is divine faith that truly and heartily performs all, by which the good man, though stripped of every help and comfort, wraps himself up as it were, not in his own virtue and strength, but in that of God; and hence it is that he cannot be conquered by any tyranny, by any threatenings, by any calamities of life, by any fear of death; for he leans upon omnipotence. *The Lord*, says he, *is my light and my salvation, whom shall I fear; the Lord is the strength of my life, of whom shall I be afraid.* Let *war arise*, let the enemy measure out his tents against me, I, says faith, am secure, *under the shadow of the most High*, and embracing him I will fear nothing.

You have here the psalmist crying with confidence out of the deeps. Behold also the prophet *Jonah* indeed, and, as we say, literally, *in the deeps*, and in circumstances which might have greater efficacy to shake his faith, than the sea itself, than the bowels of the fish, or any other depth into which he might be cast, as he was not free from

blame, but had the intermingling guilt of his own perverseness; yet among all these discouragements, his faith is not swallowed up, *I have cried unto thee in my distress, and from the very belly of hell. Thou hast cast me into the deep, and all thy waves were going over me.* So that I might truly say, *I am cast out from thy sight*, yet at the same time I said, *I will look again towards the temple of thy holiness.* I went down to the root and cavern of the mountains, the abyss surrounded me: yet when my soul was thus *overwhelmed within me, I remembered the Lord.* You have, among others, an excellent example of faith in *David*[h], when the invading enemy had burnt *Ziklag*, and carried the women captive, and the people in the madness of their rage and grief, speak of stoning *David* himself; yet besieged with all these miseries, he *strengthens himself in the Lord his God.* Nor can any thing have greater depth and strength than that expression of *Job, though he slay me, yet will I trust in him;* not only when fainting and dying, but while expiring, as it were, of the wound which I had received from the hand of God himself, yet will I hope for life and salvation from that very hand which has given me death, and in the jaws of death would send out this last word with the last breath, and with my departing soul, "Destroy not, O Lord, one that trusteth in thee."

Nor is this confidence of a pious soul, an opinion fluctuating among the waves, or a light conjecture that it shall raise its head above them, but a certain firm and infallible assurance. That is a vulgar and weak word of comfort, "To-morrow may be better than to-day*:" but the language of divine faith is stronger and firmer, even when *deep calls unto deep*, and most certainly determines that it will not be in vain: and therefore,

[h] 1 Sam. xxx.

* Ταχ ἄυριον ἴσσετ' ἀμείνων.

in the xlii. Psalm, not dubious and trembling, but with a steady voice, he silences all the noisy tumults of an agitated mind, and says, *Repose thyself on God, for I shall still praise him,* or, as it may be rendered, *I am going to praise him,* q. d. "Amidst all those tempests which rage about me, I am thinking of that hymn of praise which I shall pay to him for my deliverance, and for the happy exit out of all my sorrows." Though at present we have nothing in sight but darkness, and whirlwinds, and rocks, and the raging foaming sea, let the skill and power of the great pilot be opposed to all these. And what the Psalmist says elsewhere of sailors, may evidently be applied to those who go down into this sea, they gain this by their dangers, that *they see the works* of this great pilot in the abyss, and contemplate *His wonders in the deep.* And he who gives himself up to his care, and fixes his eye and hope wholly on him, though he be, or rather seem to be, shipwrecked, and lose all his goods, yet if he does not *make shipwreck of faith,* he loses nothing that is properly his own. Nay, when he is swallowed up in the abyss of death, he does not perish, but swims through it to the farther shore of eternity, where he finds a banquet, a palace *prepared for him, and a kingdom that cannot be moved,* but remains to endless ages.

I cried.] Prayer is the natural and genuine voice of the children of God, and as the *Latin* word *Oratio* properly signifies articulate speech, as it distinguishes man from other animals, so in this other signification it expresses that by which the godly are distinguished from the rest of mankind. It is the proper idiom of the citizens of heaven: others may recite some words of prayer, but they do not pray. As parrots and other birds by the industry of their teacher, may learn to imitate human voices, yet they do not speak; there is something wanting in all their most skilful chattering, which is the very thing that is also wanting in the language of most

that are said to pray, and that is *mind* and *meaning*, affections correspondent to the words, or rather to which the words may conform, as to their original cause, and of which they may be the true index, and sign. The spirit of this world knows not how to pray, nor does a *spirit of adoption and liberty* know how to forbear praying; the *spirit of adoption*, says the apostle, *by which we cry Abba Father*; nor can they who are new born by that spirit, live without frequent prayer. Prayer is to them, as the natural and necessary respiration of that new and divine life, as Lam. iii. 56. *turn not away from my breathing*, the *Hebrew* word there made use of *leruhethi*, properly signifies the *vital respiration* of animals. Yet notwithstanding all this, what we said above is true, and evidently appears from the passage before us, that affliction often adds vigour to prayers, how lively and assiduous soever they may have been before. Let it be so, that prayer is the natural language of believing souls, by which they daily address their heavenly Father, yet when they are pressed with an uncommon pain or danger, it is no less natural, that this voice should be louder than ordinary, and should be raised into a cry, it is indeed the breath of faith, and heavenly affections, and when they are vehemently pressed by any burden, and almost expiring under it, they breathe quicker than before, and with greater effort. Thus they who have been used to the greatest heights of daily devotion, yet in surrounding calamities pray more fervently and more frequently than ordinary, and this is to be numbered among the chief benefits attending afflictions; and it would surely be well worth our while to experience all the hardest pressures of them, if we may gain this; that the languor and sloth, and stupidity, into which our minds and our souls are ready insensibly to sink, while all is calm and serene about us, may be happily shaken off by something, which the world may call an unhappy event. That some more violent gust of wind may fan the sacred flame,

that seems almost extinguished, and blow it up into greater ardour. It will be happy for us, that with the Psalmist we should sometimes *sink in deep waters*, that so we who in prosperity do but whisper or mutter out our prayers, may from *the depths cry aloud unto him.* O how frequently and how ardently did *David* pray in the deserts, and the caves, and it is he who here cries out of the deep, and perhaps these deep recesses are those from which he was now crying; but when secure amidst the ease and delights of the court, and walking at leisure on his house-top, was tempted by his own wandering eyes, and having intermitted the fervor of prayer, burnt with impure fires. Our vows are cruel to ourselves, if they demand nothing but gentle zephyrs and flowery fields, and calm repose, as the lot of our life; for these pleasant things often prove the most dangerous enemies to our nobler and dearer life.

Oh! how true is that saying, "That faith is safe when in danger, and in danger, when secure! and prayer fervent in straits, but in joyful and prosperous circumstances, if not quite cold and dead, at least lukewarm." Oh! happy straits, if they hinder the mind from flowing forth upon earthly objects, and mingling itself with the mire, if they favour our correspondence with heaven, and quicken our love to celestial objects, without which, what we call life, may more properly deserve the name of death.

Ver. 2. *Lord hear my voice, let thine ears be attentive to the voice of my supplications.*

WE see that he was not only in earnest, which comparatively few that pray are, but that his desires were vehement, and kindled into a flame, which is the case of yet fewer. The smoke of the incense will not rise to heaven, unless it be kindled on the altar; and hence it is that a great part of our prayers vanish like an empty sound, and are dissipated in the air. Nor is it wonderful, as we have elsewhere observed, that these petitions do not ascend, which hardly go out, that go not forth from the depth of the breast, and therefore they rise not on high, but are born and die upon the lips; and how should they live when they have no principle of life, neither the constancy of faith nor the love of zeal? And if he who asks timorously, so much more he that asks with cold indifference, may seem to bespeak a denial.

It is not the much speaking and the vain repetition condemned in the gospel, to redouble the same words again and again, provided it be not from want of care and affection, but if on the contrary, it proceeds from the vehemence and exuberance of it. The great apostle tells us, *that he besought the Lord thrice*, and the Lord of the apostle, and our Lord, prayed *in the garden again and again, speaking the same words.* He that pours out his words, inattentive to what he is about, seems to me to pray long, if he utters but two sentences, though his words be ever so few, and well chosen, yet is he himself foolish and verbose. For what can be more foolish than the empty noise even of the best words, when they express nothing of the mind? But he who continues long in prayer, and urges the same petitions again and again, bursting out from the fervour of an inflamed breast, he, truly, prays in a

vivid and solid manner, and in a manner most acceptable to God; and what *Fabius* says of his orator, may with great propriety be applied to him, *Pectus est, quod disertum facit, & vis mentis*, it is the heart, and the energy of the mind, that makes a man truly eloquent.

Hear me.] The great Author of nature and of all things, does nothing in vain, he instituted not this law, and if I may so express it, art of praying, as a vain and insignificant thing; but endows it with a wonderful efficacy, for producing the greatest and happiest consequences. He would have it to be the key by which all the treasures of heaven should be opened, he has constructed it as a powerful machine, by which we may with easy and pleasant labour, remove from us the most dire and unhappy machinations of our enemy, and may with equal ease draw to ourselves what is most propitious and advantageous. Heaven and earth and all the elements obey and minister to the hands which are often lifted up to heaven in earnest prayer. Yea, all the works, and which is yet more and greater, all the words of God obey it. Well known in the sacred scriptures are the examples of *Moses* and *Joshua*; and which *James* v. 17. particularly mentions of *Elijah*, whom he expressly calls ὁμοιοπαθὴς, *a man subject to like infirmities* with ourselves, that he might illustrate the admirable force of prayer, by the common and human weakness of the person, by whom it was offered. And that Christian legion under *Antoninus* is well known and justly celebrated, which for the singular ardour and efficacy of its prayers, obtained the name of κεραυνόβολος, *the thundering legion.*

It is true indeed, that our desires and hearts are open to God, when our tongues are entirely silent, and that he has a paternal regard to all our concerns; nor do we utter our petitions to him, as if he were ignorant or negligent of our necessities and desires, for we well know that he sees and hears

every thing, παντ' ἐφορᾶ καὶ παντ' ἐπακούει. It is also true that his counsels are all fixed and immoveable, but it can by no means be inferred from these premisses, that the business of prayer is vain and needless; and if any one would represent these things as superseding prayer, surely he deceives himself, and by all his reasonings would make out nothing, unless it were to convict himself of a vast ingratitude to the divine munificence, and a most shameful unworthiness of so excellent a gift.

Ought not this intercourse of men with God by prayer, to be most reverently and gratefully received and cultivated by all, and numbered among the chief favours of the divine, and dignities of the human nature? and truly this, as much as any thing that can be imagined, is a lamentable argument of the stupidity of man, in this fallen state, that such an honour is so little regarded. Opportunities of conversing with nobles or princes of the earth are rare and short; and if a man of inferior station be admitted to such a favour, he glories in it, as if he were raised to heaven; though they are but images made of the same clay with himself, and only set upon a basis a little higher than the rest: but the liberty of daily and free converse with the King of heaven is neglected for every trifle, and indeed is counted as nothing, though his very aspect alone fills so many myriads of blessed spirits above with full and perpetual felicity.

Again, is it not most reasonable to acknowledge, by this spiritual sacrifice of prayer, his infinite power and goodness, and that most providential care by which he governs all human affairs? And when our very being and life depend upon him, and all the comfort and happiness of life, how congruous is it to exhibit this sign and token of his holding us by the hand, and of our being borne up by him? Again, what sweeter lenitive of all those miseries with which mortal life so continually abounds, can be invented, than this, to pour out all our care and trouble into

his bosom, as that of a most faithful friend and affectionate father? Then does the good man lay himself down to sleep with sweet composure, in the midst of waves and storms, when he has lulled all the care and sorrows of his heart to sleep, by pouring out his prayer to God. And once more, how pleasant is it, that these benefits, which are of so great a value both on their own account, and that of the divine benignity from whence they come, should be delivered into our hands, marked as it were with this grateful inscription, *That they have been obtained by prayer?*

Hear, O Lord.] It is certain that the greater part of men, as they babble out vain, languid and inefficacious prayers, most unworthy the ear of the blessed God; so they seem in some degree to set a just estimate upon them, neither hoping for any success from them, nor indeed seeming to be at all solicitous about it, but committing them to the wind, as vain words, which in truth they are. But far be it from a wise and pious man, that he should so foolishly and coldly trifle in so serious an affair; his prayer has a certain tendency and scope, at which he aims with assiduous and repeated desires, and doth not only pray that he may pray, but that he may obtain an answer: and as he firmly believes that it may be obtained, so he firmly, and constantly, and eagerly urges his petition, that he may not flatter himself with an empty hope; for it cannot be that any pious and reasonable desire should be directed toward the throne of God in vain, since he has been pleased to assume it among his titles, that he is *a God hearing prayer.* And certainly, though the good man does not always obtain the very thing that he asks, yet pure and right petitions never ascend in vain; but he who presents them, either obtains the thing he asks, or receives, instead of what is pleasing, what is truly profitable, and instead of the things that he wishes for, those that are upon the

whole the fittest and best, and that in the fittest and best time: therefore the vehemence of prayer is to be attempered with patience and long-suffering expectation. We often put our ourselves as it were out of breath with the eagerness of speaking, and are presently weary, if we do not immediately obtain our request. Our prayers are often like those of the damsel who danced before *Herod*, *I will that thou presently give me* this or that; whereas, he that prays fervently, urges this, that God would make haste to help him; but in the mean time, as he believes, will not make haste, nor will he suffer if the delay be ever so long, that a speech like that of the impious king of *Israel* should escape him, *This evil is of the Lord, and why should I wait for the Lord any longer*[k]?

But O! how necessary is it, that souls worshipping so pure a God, should be purged from all the earthly dregs of impure affections. Most true is that oracle of the Psalmist, *If I regard iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear my prayer.* The *hands must be washed in innocence* before they can be lifted up to him with acceptance. *Draw near to God*, says the apostle *James*, *and he will draw near to you*; but in order to this, he subjoins, *Cleanse your hands ye sinners; and purify your hearts ye hypocrites*, or *ye double-minded*, who are the impurest of all. These things we only briefly suggest, but I beseech you, my dear charge, that ye embrace this divine study, that you labour to obtain this sacred art, which is the best and only way of being enriched with all the most valuable blessings, even those of a celestial origin and tendency. O think, it is nothing unpleasant, nothing low and contemptible, to which you are now invited; on the contrary, that there is nothing more delightful, nothing more sublime, than to meditate upon heavenly objects, to converse with God, and from thence to imbibe a

[k] 2 Kings vi. 33.

contempt of this low and transitory world, to be raised above all perishing enjoyments, and to taste the prelibations of that celestial life itself.

But how accurately soever the precepts of this divine oratory may be delivered, none will effectually receive them, unless they are taught the skill by God himself. We must pray that we may be able to pray, and draw as it were from that superior academy, that faculty of pure and pious speech which flies as with a swift, ready and natural motion to heaven from whence it came, and brings down with it the most precious gifts into the bosom of the person that utters it: and by the way it is a most certain truth, that the greatest blessings are much more easily obtained from the great God, who is so munificent in his gifts, than others of a meaner nature; so that it were an argument of a low and abject mind, not to ask something noble and excellent, *Covet earnestly the best gifts*, in this sense. If we ask only things of a low and trifling nature, unworthy such a giver, he may answer as a prince did, "These are not royal gifts," οὐ βασίλικον τὸ δῶρον: but if we ask those things that are most precious and valuable, grace and glory, there will be no room to fear that denial, οὐκ ἀνθρώπινον τὸ λῆμμα, it is not fit for a man to receive it. *If you who are evil know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more your heavenly Father?* Surely he is goodness itself, and he only gives what is good; and the better those things are that we ask, the more freely and chearfully does he bestow them: and you know *Luke*, repeating the same speech, expresses it, by saying, *He shall give the Holy Spirit to them that ask it*; than which nothing more noble can be either desired or bestowed.

Ver. 3. *If thou, Lord, shouldst mark iniquities, O Lord, who shall stand.*

AMONG all the virtues which are necesary to offer up our prayers with acceptance, none ascend with greater velocity, and rise higher, than that very humility, which causes them, as it were, to descend the deepest of all; nor is there any more indubitable argument of humility, than a conscience which groans under the burden of its own sin and guilt, among all the abyss of calamities, crying especially from this depth. And thus we see the Psalmist, while he involves all other evils, how great soever they might be, under one common title, fixed upon this to expatiate upon it at large, *If thou, Lord, shouldst mark iniquities*, &c. Thus, if any one desires to mount more readily and more favourably from the depth of calamity, let him cry from this depth of profound humility, and plead a penitent sense of sin: for though of all imaginable depths, that of sin be the most remote from the most high and most holy God, yet the depth of the humble soul, depressed under the weight of sin, is nearest of all to the deep bowels of divine mercy; so that the words of the Psalmist may not improperly be accommodated to this, though in a sense something different from that which in their connection they bear, *Deep calls unto deep*, and by an harmonious kind of *Antiphony*, if I may be allowed the expression, they do most musically answer to each other.

One might have been ready perhaps to imagine, from the vehemence with which he begins his address, and from his groanings as it were, so thick and so short, that he was something of a bold petitioner, and that he had some confidence in himself; that he presumed to knock as it were so often and so loud at the door of divine mercy. But what he here

adds plainly shews, that this was far from being the case, "*Hear me, O Lord, hear me*; and I urge the request, because necessity presses urgently upon me. Not that I am, or judge myself to be one who can merit thine assistance, but that I stand in such need of it, that if it be not granted me, I must perish. So far am I from being, or appearing to myself worthy of thy help, that behold I am overwhelmed with sin more than with sorrows. It is free mercy that I invoke, and I beseech thee, that in order to thy hearing the voice of my prayer, thou wouldst not hearken to the cry of my sins. Wash away the one, that thou mayst graciously smile upon the other; for, *If thou, Lord, shouldst mark iniquity, who shall stand.*" Intimating, that if he were drawn out of the other depths, yet if his sins continued unremitted, he could find no place on which to stand; yea, if it were possible for him in that case to fly away, and hide himself, yet he would rather plunge himself into these depths again, and would rather be, as it were, buried and lost in floods of the greatest calamities, than meet the more dreadful flame of the divine anger and indignation.

But this humble acknowledgment of his own unworthiness and pollution, is so far from being inconsistent with the pious confidence of prayer, that it is not only congruous, but even as it were congenial to it, and inseparable, so as to be most agreeable to that great King whom it addresses. Humility or contrition of heart is often thought by men to be the mark of a low and abject mind, and as such is often despised by them, but nothing is more honourable in the sight of God. "He, says *Augustine* *, will bow down his ear if thou dost not lift up thy neck." There is certainly no more efficacious method of supplicating and obtaining grace, than to do it, if I may so speak, *sub forma pauperis*, confessing and pleading our poverty. He finds the most easy access in

* Inclinat aurem Deus, si tu non erigis cervicem.

the court of heaven who meets the most frequent repulses on earth. Nay, if I may so express myself, the heavenly court sits and resides in him. The two chief temples and palaces of the great King are that τρισάγιὸν, thrice holy place in the third heaven, and the humble and contrite heart upon earth. The best manner of praying therefore is that which is made up of faith, fear and humility. By the equal libration of these wings, the soul mounts on high, while that of fear does not sink too low, nor that of confidence rise too high*. By these we are daily and early to soar to God, and care must be taken that these wings of the soul be not dragged down by excess, nor scorched by lust, nor clogged and glued together, as it were, by covetousness, or any other terrene and viscid affection. But let us now a little more particularly see what this confession of the prophet was.

If thou, Lord, shouldst mark iniquity, O Lord, who shall stand.] An uninstructed and incautious reader might perhaps imagine, that the Psalmist was here seeking for refuge in a crowd, and desirous of sheltering himself under the common lot of human nature; at least that he would endeavour to find some low excuse for himself, in the mention of its universal degeneracy. But the design of the sacred writer is far different from this: he confesses that whatever he, or any other person, on a transient and inattentive glance, may imagine of his innocence, yet when the eye of the mind is directed inward in a serious and fixed manner, then he sees the sum and bulk of his sins to be so immensely great, that he is even struck into astonishment by it; so that he finds himself beset, as it were, on every side with armed troops, which cut off all possibility of escape, otherwise than by flying to divine mercy, and to the freedom of pardoning grace. He perceives himself unable to bear

* Oratio timida cœlum non attingit, temeraria resilit, & vi suâ frangitur. BERNARD.

the examination of an awakened conscience, exercising itself in impartial self-reflection, and arguing from thence how much less he would be able to endure the penetrating eye and strict scrutiny of the divine justice; he cries out, as it were in horror and trembling, under an apprehension of it, *If thou, Lord, shouldst mark iniquities*, &c. He sees himself overwhelmed with crimes, held at bay, as it were, by his sins of every side, which roar around him like so many savage creatures just ready to devour him. And he that does not see this to be his own case, is either almost blind, or lives abroad, and never descends into his own breast. Gross offences alone strike the eye of our fellow-creatures; but when we seriously consider that we have to do with an all-seeing judge, who looks at once through every covering, and sees the most secret recesses of our hearts, who considers not only what may be concealed from men, but even from ourselves, so as most clearly to discover every the least stain and speck of our inmost soul, and whose infinite holiness must also abhor it: is it possible that any one should be so infatuated, as in such a view still to retain a false and foolish conceit of his own innocence? It cannot be doubted, that they who daily and accurately survey themselves and their own hearts, though they may indeed escape many of those evils which the generality of mankind, who live as it were by chance, fall into, yet in consequence of that very care and study see so much the more clearly their own impurity, and contract a greater abhorrence of themselves, and a more reverend dread of the divine judgments. And it is certain that the holier any one is, the viler will he be in his own eyes; and I may also add, the viler he is in his own eyes, the more dear, precious and honourable will he be in the sight of God. But where is the heart, yea, I may say, where is the forehead of the generality of mankind, who boast of it as if it were some great matter to be free from the infamy of the most atrocious crimes; have they not

continually the reward of this their egregious virtue? "I have not committed murder and robbery—You are not gibbeted for the food of crows and ravens *." But they who bring the whole of their conduct, their deeds and their words, the glances of their eye, and all the inward workings of their affections, and examine them by the pure and strait rule of the divine law, so as to perceive how many and how great errors attend every most cautious day; and they who feel how wavering and weak their faith is, how lukewarm at least, if not how cold, their piety and charity, how ardent their love of this world still continues, how untamed the flesh, how unguarded the senses, how unbridled the affections, how attentive their hearts to trifles, while in prayer, so light and so wandering; they, I say, who perceive and reflect on this, with what poignant grief, with what overwhelming shame must they be seized, and how earnestly and how justly will they cry out, *If thou, Lord, shouldst mark iniquity, who could stand?*

If thou shouldst mark.] If thou shouldst enquire and scrutinize, and then shouldst retain and impute, for the *Hebrew* word imports both. If thou shouldst enquire, thou wouldst find something of iniquity in the most righteous of mankind, and when thou hast found it, if thou shouldst retain it, and call him to an account for it, he could by no means free himself of the charge, or expiate the crime. Enquiring thou wouldst easily find iniquity, but he by the most diligent enquiry would be able to discover no ransom, and therefore will be unable to stand, will have no place on which to set his foot, but will fall by the irresistible judgments of thy law, and sentence of thy justice.

There have been great disputes one way and another about the merit of good works; but I truly think they who have laboriously engaged in them

* Furtum non feci. Non pascis in cruce corvos.

have been very idly, though very eagerly, employed about nothing. Since the more sober of the schoolmen themselves acknowledge there can be no such thing as meriting from the blessed God, in the human, or to speak more accurately, in any created nature whatsoever; nay, so far from any possibility of merit, there can be no room for reward any otherwise than of the sovereign pleasure and gracious kindness of God: and the more ancient writers when they use the word merit, mean nothing by it but a certain correlate to that reward, which God both promises and bestows of mere grace and benignity; otherwise in order to constitute what is properly called merit, many things must concur, which no man in his senses will presume to attribute to human works, though ever so excellent, particularly that the thing done must not previously be matter of debt, and be entire or our own act, unassisted by foreign aid, it must also be perfectly good, and bear an adequate proportion to the reward claimed in consequence of it; if all these things do not concur, the act cannot possibly arise to merit. Whereas I think no one will venture to assert, that any one of these can take place in any human action whatever. But why should I enlarge here, when one single circumstance overthrows all those titles; the most righteous of mankind would not be able to stand, if his works were weighed in the balance of strict justice, how much less then could they deserve that immense glory which is now in question? Nor is this only to be denied concerning the unbeliever and sinner, but concerning the righteous and pious believer, who is not only free from all the guilt of his former impenitence and rebellion, but endowed with the gift of the spirit. The interrogation here expresses the most vehement negation, and signifies that no mortal in whatever degree he is placed, if he be called to the strict examination of divine justice, without daily and repeated forgiveness, could be able to keep his stand-

ing, and much less could he arise to that glorious height. "That merit, says *Bernard*, on which my hope relies, consists in these three things, the love of adoption, the truth of the promise, and the power of its performance*." This is the threefold cord which cannot be broken.

Ver. 4. *But there is forgiveness with thee, that thou mayest be feared.*

THIS is the genuine method of divine grace, it first demands a mind void of all confidence in itself; that so it may be filled with a pure and entire trust in God, for though that blind self confidence, which is so natural to us, be flatulent and empty, yet while it possesses the mind, it is, as it were, blown up by it, and that swelling shakes off every thing more solid, and prevents its access even when it seems to surround us on every side. Yea, it seems that the riches and magnificence of divine grace cannot with so much decency communicate itself, when it is, as it were, straitened by the receiver; for since it is so great as to be able to fill every thing, it requires a free and ample space, in which to dilate itself. He, who in the first original of the new born world, brought all things out of nothing, acts like himself in the regeneration and restoration of mankind to holiness, the Holy Spirit finds nothing but *Tohu va Bohu*, nothing but what is *without form and void;* and whoever of mankind perceives and acknowledges this to be his case, may be assured that the Spirit of God already begins to move upon him to impregnate the face of the abyss, and then it is said concerning them, *Let there be light, and there is light*, even that light by which they see themselves unformed and dark, and destitute of every thing

* Meritum, cui innititur spes mea, tribus hisce constat, charitate adoptionis, veritate promissionis, et potestate redditionis.

that is good. It is a great sign of a soul beginning to emerge from its misery, to give up every hope of emerging from it, except that one which arises from free mercy alone, and in this sense, it may truly be said, as it is by the Poet,

Una salus miseris nullam sperare salutem.
"The wretched find no safety but despair."

i.e. in themselves, in their own righteousness or innocence, their own industry in fulfilling the law, or any expiation they can make for the breach of it: And what the Apostle says of his own danger, may properly enough be applied to a confession of the soul, pressed under the burden of its own guilt, *We had received the sentence of death in ourselves, that we might not trust in ourselves, but in God that raises the dead.* For the exclamation before us bears a remarkable resemblance to that expression, *If thou, Lord, shouldst mark iniquity, O Lord, who could stand? but there is forgiveness with thee that thou mayst be feared.* He that from justice found not any ground upon which he might stand, finds in mercy a place from which he may rise again, and this is the remedy of all our grief and distress, and in this sense we must be sick that we may recover, and must die that we may live. Grace exerts its power, where nature and art and all the excellency and strength of human nature fail; nor does any soul celebrate the divine benignity more signally than those, who are snatched as it were out of the flames, when they are beginning to seize them, and being rescued from the very jaws of hell, return to life again and breathe in the land of the living.

That trite distinction of sin, into mortal and venial, which is so common among the schoolmen, is not only vain and destitute of all support from the word of God, but is indeed very faulty, and far from being itself venial, well deserves to be exploded as mortal; for that maligant influence which it has upon the

morals of men. If the most open danger of the divine displeasure, and of eternal death, cannot hinder the bold race of men from rushing on headlong to every crime*, and breaking all the barriers of duty which God has prescribed them, will it not add great licentiousness to all the crowd and tumult of headstrong desires, when some sins are said to be by their own nature, and in the whole kind of them, free from the condemning sentence of the divine law? But what I here oppose is this, give me the holiest man upon earth, the man who of all others stands at the remotest distance, both in the affections of his mind, and conduct of his life, from those sins which they acknowledge as mortal, will he not deeply feel his need of daily forgiveness, from the multiplied pollutions of his daily infirmities? He truly accounts no sin little, which is committed against the great and ever-blessed God, nor any pardon little, which he knows to proceed from his infinite grace. Nor will he promise himself the pardon of the least fault which he indulges; nor will he despair of obtaining a pardon of the greatest for which he is truly penitent. And this is the law of grace. The poet said with a great deal of justice, "That no sinner is absolved by himself†," because he is as it were turned informer against himself: Yet in another sense the sinner is absolved by that very self-accusation, and sorrowing for his sins, is freed from the guilt of them; for it is not by any means to be conceived, that any one can return into favour with God, unless he return to God; nor that any one can return to God, unless he renounce every sin, which if he does, they are all entirely forgiven, and those which he eagerly desires to *cast behind his back, shall never rise up to condemn him to his face*, before the tribunal of the divine justice. This sentiment runs through all the evangelical

* Audax omnia perpeti
Gens humana, ruit per vetitum nefas. *Hor.*

† Se indice nemo nocens absolvitur.

discourses of the Prophets, by which, as so many heralds, they call a rebellious people to return to the allegiance of God their supreme king, *return ye backsliding children, and I will heal your backslidings.* Yea the very fountain of grace, the Lord of the Prophets, who is himself the great author and sum of the gospel doctrine, as soon as ever he came forth to publish this grace, said, *repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.* Nor can any mind that is not fallen into utter madness and compleat distraction, dream of a pardon, how ample and glorious soever, to be imparted to a sinner, that will not repent or return: nor indeed can it so much as be wished. For how unworthy would it be of the divine majesty and wisdom, to throw away such precious graces on those who so obstinately despise them: *But there is forgiveness with him,* which is added with the utmost propriety: with him there is a treasure of mercy laid up, to be imparted most freely and richly to every humble sinner that applies to him for it. Nor is the dispensing Grace in this way, at all inconsistent with the riches and freeness of it, since the greatest sins, and most aggravated crimes are absolutely forgiven, without any penalty or fine whatsoever imposed upon the offender; yet on this most reasonable and happy condition, that they who are thus received into the divine favour, should express their grateful acknowledgements for it, by love, obedience and sanctity of life. Neither is this forgiveness the less free and gracious, because Jesus Christ as our surety and redeemer has paid the price of it, having been appointed for and destined to this great and arduous work by the Father. For what does that great Father of mercies herein, but in order to our compleat discharge, by one certain and ever to be admired way, satisfy himself of his own, by fastening his only begotten Son to the Cross; the repository of this treasure is opened, the whole price is poured out at once, that great price of redemption, more precious than all the treasures, than all the

mines of gold in the world, or even the whole world itself. But they who anxiously debate the point, whether God could simply and absolutely pardon sin without any price, do but trifle; for whatever may be supposed concerning that, who is there that will deny that this way of the salvation of men which God has chosen, is so full of stupendous mystery, and so illustrious, if I may so speak, for that *triune*, and to us most benign *Aspect of Wisdom, Justice* and *Mercy*, that nothing can be thought of more worthy the divine majesty, nothing sweeter, nothing more munificent with respect to unworthy man; so that it will appear *Athanasius* speaks very prudently when he said, "We ought not in this matter so much to consider the absolute power of God, as what is most advantageous to man, and what most worthy the divine Being*."

It was fit that our wise Creator should give us a law, and that law was both useful and pleasant to those who would carefully observe it; but when once violated, there would necessarily arise a fatal enmity between the law and transgressors, an enmity which would continually become progressive, and gather new strength in the progress; but as for our obstinacy, what is it more than πρὸς κέντρα λακτίζειν, *to kick against the pricks?* The law is inviolably safe in its own sanctity, dignity and immortality; but we by striving against it, what do we gain but iniquity, disgrace and death? So that if there were no umpire to interpose, there would be no hope, but that the whole human kind should perish. But that blessed and efficacious Intercessor came from on high, and certainly he was himself a divine person, who could compose such a controversy, and who joining by an indissoluble union his infinitely better, with our miserable and mortal nature, did so by a most wonder-

* Οὐκ ἔτως δει ἐν τούτῳ τῳ πραγματι τὸ ἀπογῶς τῷ θεῷ δύνατον λογίζεσθαι, ὡς τὸ τοῖς ἀνθρώποις λυσιτελέστερον καὶ πανυ γε ὁμῶς θεοπρεπέστερον.

ful method, render to the law all its accuracy of obedience, and to us though guilty, impunity. And having thus made peace, that concord might afterwards continue and prevail, he animates all that partake of this blessed peace, by his own new, pure and divine Spirit, that they might not only be engaged sincerely to endeavour diligently to observe the sacred precepts of the law, but might love them, and cordially embrace them; and, on the other hand, he hath tempered the severity of the law towards all those that are received into favour, that their diligent, pious and affectionate observance of the law, though not entirely compleat, should by our indulgent Father be most graciously accepted, even as if it were perfect; and so the honour of the divine legislator is secure among men, and his peace descends upon them; and this is what our text observes, *There is forgiveness with thee, that thou mayst be feared.*

It is well known that the fear of God is commonly used in scripture to signify, not only the whole of his worship, but all pious affections whatsoever; and consequently the whole of true religion. And some translate the expression here, *that thou mayst be reverently worshipped:* and it is thus used with the greatest propriety. I speak of that fear which is so far from denoting that servile, hostile dread and terror which some might think of, that, on the contrary it entirely excludes it, being properly a reverence tempered with love: yet I do not think that we are to exclude all dread of punishment and vindictive justice under the name of a servile and disingenuous fear; nay I apprehend such a fear to be very necessary even to those who most ardently love, so long as they live in the flesh, in order to tame and rein in the petulancy of it; yea love itself places fear as a kind of bit and bridle to the flesh[a], *My flesh trembles for fear of thee, and I am afraid of thy judg-*

[a] Psalm cxix. 128.

ments. Heb. xii. *ult. Let us serve God with reverence and godly fear, for our God is a consuming fire.* This is the fear which is called the *beginning of wisdom,* and marked with other very high titles of honour in the sacred scripture; without which we can neither conceive the beginning of divine worship and true piety, nor pursue the improvement of it.

As this holy and pure fear is the compend and summary of religion, so this pardon and free remission of sins is the great foundation and support of that fear and religion. As the whole human race is defiled with sin, the despair of pardon, would entirely drive us away from God, and precluding all ways of returning, would plunge the offender headlong into eternal banishment and eternal hatred.

With thee is forgiveness, that thou mayst be feared; that men may not dread thee, and flee thee as an inexorable judge and enemy, but may reverence, love, and serve thee, as a mild and gracious Lord, as a most merciful and loving father. And this is that joyful message of the gospel, to which sinners run, as soon as they hear and understand it, prostrating themselves with all humility at the feet of so mild a Lord, and so gracious a king. "For no one, as *Ambrose* says, will think of repenting, but he who hopes for indulgence*." This merciful God calls back to his favour those that are as it were flying from it, saying, *Return ye apostates and rebels, and I will pardon and heal your backslidings.* And they, as if their bowels sounded to the unison note of mercy, with reciprocal penitence and love, answer, *Behold we come unto thee, for thou art Jehovah our God.* And this is that which the great Messenger and Author of our salvation preached and set forth; *Repent,* says he, *for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.* You are not now pursued by wrath

* Nemo meditabitur pœnitentiam, nisi qui speraverit indulgentiam.

and vengeance, threatening utterly to extirpate you and cut you off, but the kingdom of heaven, the dispensation of love, mercy and grace, opens its bosom to embrace you, and freely offers you the full pardon of all your former obstinacy and rebellion. Behold the compassionate Father meeting that prodigal son, which had so basely run from him, while yet afar off on his return; and instead of chiding and upbraiding him, burying as it were not only all his sins, but even his very confession, as in a deluge of love, amidst the tenderest embraces, kisses, and tears. *Make me to hear*, says *David*, *the voice of joy and gladness, that the bones which thou hast broken may rejoice.* By that lamentable fall, he had as it were dashed himself against the rock of divine justice, so that *all his bones were broken;* but what *a voice of joy and gladness* is that which should restore full soundness and strength to bones which had as it were been crushed and shattered to pieces. Surely it is no other voice than that so often used by our Saviour in the gospel, *Son be of good cheer, thy sins are forgiven thee.* That was the *grace*, softer than oil, sweeter than roses, *which flowed from his lips* into the sinners wounds, and being poured into the contrite heart, not only heals but blesses it, yea, and marks it out for eternal blessedness. But alas! the greater part of sinners sleep in their misery, and though their distempers are mortal, feel them not. It is therefore no great wonder that this grace, this precious, this invaluable remedy is despised by them. But O! how sweet is the voice of pardon to a soul groaning under the burden of sin.

——— *Quale per æstum*
Dulcis aquæ saliente sitim restinguere rivo.

"Sweet as the living stream to summer thirst."

But as one well expresses it; "He that has never known discomfort, knows not what consolation means. Men of this world, entangled in the cares

of life, and in its crimes, insensible of misery, attend not to mercy *." But if any who imagine themselves partakers of this forgiveness do not at the same time feel their hearts struck with a pious fear of the Divine Majesty, let them know that their joys are all self-invented dreams, since it is for this very end that *there is forgiveness with God* even *that he may be feared.*

In the remainder of this Psalm the author asserts his confidence in God, and labours to confirm and establish that of all true believers.

Ver. 5. *I wait for the Lord, my soul doth wait, and in his word do I hope.*

6. *My soul waiteth for the Lord, more than they that watch for the morning; I say more than they that watch for the morning.*

7. *Let Israel hope in the Lord, for with the Lord there is mercy, and with him is plenteous redemption.*

8. *And he shall redeem Israel from all his iniquities.*

I wait for the Lord.] With thee is mercy, they who heartily believe this, are drawn by that sweet and amiable force and desire to be partakers of it. And certainly there is no true faith in the doctrine of salvation, unless it be attended with this magnetic force by which it draws the soul to God. One would think it should be impossible, where this effect is not produced, that there should be so much as an historical faith; and surely it is contrary to, and inconsistent with the rational nature, to see so desirable and excellent a good laid down, as it were, before us, and freely offered, without running most freely to embrace it, with open arms, and an ardent impetuosity of soul.

* Quisquis autem desolationem non novit, nec consolationem agnoscere potest. Homines seculi negotiis & flagitiis implicati, dum miseriam non sentiunt, misericordiam non attendunt. BERN.

The *faith* therefore of vulgar and merely nominal Christians is quite *dead*, and deserves not the name of faith at all. I mean that which is not sufficient to excite them earnestly to desire and expect that divine grace which they say they believe. True and lively faith is the eye of the inner man, which beholds an infinitely amiable God, the lucid and perpetual fountain of grace, and by the view is immediately kindled into most fervent love. That divine light which is sent from heaven into the soul, is the vehicle of heat too, and by its ardent rays, presently sets the heart on fire; the flame rises sublime, and bears all the affections of the mind with it, to that consummate beauty which it renders visible.

When a philosopher was asked, why that which is fair attracts our love? he answered, "It is the question of a blind man," τύφλου ἐρώτημα. Well then might the Psalmist, when he has been contemplating the divine goodness, represent himself as quite trsnsported with its charms, q. d. "It is nothing earthly, nothing mortal, that is the object of my wish; my soul hangs on the Lord alone; *it thirsts for thee*, and till it arrives at the enjoyment of thee, it will still be waiting. Hasten Lord to support and comfort me, *for I am sick with love; nor is there any thing in heaven or earth beside thee, O Lord*, which can satiate or delight this soul of mine, pierced through as it were with this sacred passion: and though I am and feel myself to be most unworthy of loving thee, or of hoping ever to enjoy thee, yet my meanness and vileness, even when compared with thine immense majesty and sublimity, do not deter me so much, as thy boundless clemency and goodness, added to thy truth, while I have thy word of promise before mine eyes for my support, sustains me, and animates my courage; therefore, while my love and desires are most ardent, I will nevertheless expect and wait with inward patience and perseverance: and though a heart which loves

like mine, must find a delay grievous, yet unshaken hope shall alleviate that sickness of the soul. Just *as they that watch for the morning*, however they may be afflicted with the darkness and coldness of the night, are constantly supported with the assured hope that the dawn will come, and the day arise in all its glory."

Nor does the Psalmist envy others their share in these felicities which arise from love and hope; on the contrary, with a chearful and liberal mind, he invites all to this immense ocean of riches, not shut up, but free to all, *Let Israel hope in the Lord:* And lest the confluence of such vast numbers should suggest any fears of straitness and want, he confidently declares that there is wealth enough and more than enough, to supply all their necessities; *for with the Lord*, says he, *there is mercy, and with him plenteous redemption;* grace rich and copious enough to support all sinners, and to forgive all sins, and all that apply to it shall infallibly find that he redeems *Israel* from all his iniquities. The eye of faith is by no means evil, but bright and sparkling with unbounded charity; it wishes all good to all, and above all, wishes them a beatific union with the supreme and infinite good. As in that kingdom of glory there is no malignity, no envy, because there can be no straitness, but according to that emphatical saying of our blessed Saviour, *There are many mansions*, there is boundless space, and the seats of pious souls are not marked out in any narrow boundaries, but in an ample court; so even in the previous kingdom and banquet of grace, our heavenly Father's house is magnificent, both on account of its amplitude, and the rich provision which it contains.

Let me beseech you therefore strictly to examine your own souls, enquire what it is that they chiefly wish, hope and desire; whether they give chace as it were to every painted fly; whether, *forsaking the fountain of living waters*, they are digging for

themselves *cisterns* of clay, and these leaky too, with great and unprofitable labour. O! wretched deceitfulness of every earthly hope, which mocks and deludes us so much the more in proportion to the extravagance of its promises. Blessed are they, and only they, who fix their eyes and their souls above, and say with the Psalmist, *Lord I wait on thee, my soul does wait, and in thy word do I trust:* and as elsewhere, *And now Lord, what wait I for, my hope is in thee.* Happy they who have quitted all those low desires and pursuits, which are unworthy of a generous and immortal spirit, and have fixed their love on one: whose heart and hopes are set upon that one, in whom all things excellent meet and center. A chearful joy always shines on their face; nor do their cheeks glow with the shame of repulse and disappointment. While we are wandering hither and thither, in the vicious and perplexed pursuit of flattering objects, what frequent lamentation, what fond complaint of delusive fortune, and that tragical outcry, ἰώ ἰὼ τραυταῖων ἐπωδύνων, of grievous and painful wounds! What crowds of fears and cares divide the mind, and hurry it now one way, and now another? but when we fix our hope and our heart on the only support, on the only true and all-sufficient good, all is safe, and the soul treads firm as it were, while the whole globe trembles. Let external things be borne this way or that, there is peace within; nor when all methods have been examined, can any other be found for the establishment of the mind, than that it should lay all its stress upon the one immoveable and immutable Rock.

A MODEST DEFENCE *

OF

MODERATE EPISCOPACY,

As established in Scotland at the Restoration of King Charles II.

1. EPISCOPAL government, managed in conjunction with presbyters, presbyteries, and synods, is not contrary to the rule of scripture, or the example of the primitive church, but most agreeable to both.

2. Yea, it is not contrary to that new covenant, which is pretended by so many as the main, if not the only, reason of their scrupling; and for their sakes it is necessary to add this: for notwithstanding the many irregularities both in the matter and form of that covenant, and in the illegal and violent ways of pressing and prosecuting of it; yet to them who still remain under the conscience of its full force and obligation, and in that some inconvinceably persuaded, it is certainly most pertinent, if it be true, to declare the consistence of the present government, even with that obligation.

And as both of these assertions, I believe, upon the exactest (if impartial and impassionate) inquiry, will be found to be in themselves true, so they are owned by the generality of the presbyterians in England, as themselves have published their opinions in print, with this title, *Two Papers of proposals, humbly presented to his Majesty, by the reverend*

* Even this Modest Defence takes for granted the leading point in debate between Episcopalians and Presbyterians, namely, the superiority *de jure*, and *ex officio*, of one scriptural bishop, or teaching presbyter, to another overseer, or teaching elder.

Several other animadversations on the Modest Defence might be made, particularly respecting the alledged violence of the Scotch Covenanters, which we forbear to make. EDIT.

ministers of the Presbyterian persuasion, printed at London, anno 1661.

Besides other passages in those papers to the same purpose, in page 11 and 12 are these words: "And as these are our general ends and motives, so "we are induced to insist upon the form of a synodi- "cal government, conjunct with a fixed presidency "or episcopacy; for these reasons:

"1. We have reason to believe that no other "terms will be so generally agreed on, &c.

"2. It being agreeable to the scripture and the "primitive government, is likeliest to be the way "of a more universal concord, if ever the churches "on earth arrive at such a blessing: however, it "will be most acceptable to God and well informed "consciences.

"3. It will promote the practice of discipline "and godliness without discord, and promote "order without hindering discipline and godli- "ness.

"4. And it is not to be silenced (though in "some respects we are loathe to mention it) that it "will save the nations from the violation of the "solemn vow and covenant, without wronging "the church at all, or breaking any other oath, "&c."

And a little after, they add, "That the prelacy "disclaimed in that covenant, was the engrossing "the sole power of ordination and jurisdiction; and "exercising of the whole discipline, absolutely by "bishops themselves, and their delegates, chan- "cellors, surrogates, and officials, &c. excluding "wholly the pastors of particular churches from all "share in it."

And there is one of prime note amongst them, who, in a large treatise of church-government, does clearly evidence, that this was the mind both of the parliament of England, and of the assembly of divines at Westminster, as they themselves did expressly declare it in the admitting of the covenant,

That they understood it not to be against all Episcopacy; but only against that particular frame, as it is worded in the article itself*. As for our present model in Scotland, and the way of managing it, whatsoever is amiss (and it can be no wrong to make that supposition, concerning any church on earth) the brethren that are dissatisfied, had possibly better acquitted their duty, by free admonitions and significations of their own sense in all things, than by leaving their stations, which is the only thing that has made the breach (I fear very hard to cure, and in human appearance near to incurable). But there is much charity due to those following their own consciences; and they owe, and I hope they pay, the same back again to those that do the same in another way. And whatsoever may be the readiest and happiest way, of re-uniting those that are naturally so minded, the Lord reveal it to them in due time.

This one word I shall add, That this difference should arise to a great height, may seem somewhat strange to any man, that calmly considers, that there is in this church no change at all, neither in the doctrine nor worship; no, nor in the substance of the discipline itself; but when it falls on matter easily inflammable, a little sparkle, how great a fire will it kindle!

Oh! who would not long for the shadows of the evening, from all those poor childish contests!

But some will say that we are engaged against prelacy by covenant, and therefore cannot yield to so much as you do, without perjury.

Ans. That this is wholly untrue, I thus demonstrate.—When that covenant was presented to the assembly with the bare name of prelacy joined to

* Baxter of Church Government, P. III. C. 1. tit. page 275. "An Episcopacy desirable for the reformation, preservation, and peace of the churches, a fixed president, *durante vita.*" See p. 297 and 330. ibid.

popery, many contrary and reverend divines, desired that the word (prelacy) might be explained, because it was not all Episcopacy they were against; and thereupon the following clause, in the parenthesis, was given by way of explication, in these words, (That the church government by archbishops, bishops, their chancellors, and commissaries, deans, and chapters, arch-deacons, and all the other ecclesiastical officers depending on that hierarchy) by which it appears, that it was only the English hierarchy or frame, that was covenanted against; and that which was then existent, that was taken down.

II. When the house of lords took the covenant, Mr. Thomas Coleman, that gave it them, did so explain it, and profess that it was not their intent to covenant against all Episcopacy; and upon this explication it was taken; and certainly the parliament was most capable of giving the due sense of it, seeing it was they that did impose it.

III. And it could not be all Episcopacy that was excluded, because a parochial Episcopacy was at that same time used and approved commonly in England.

IV. And in Scotland they had used the help of visitors, for the reformation of their churches, committing the care of a country or circuit, to some one man, which was as high a sort of Episcopacy at least as any I am pleading for; besides that, they had moderators in all their synods, which were temporary bishops.

V. Also the chief divines of the late assembly at Westminster, that recommended that covenant to the nations, have professed their own judgment for such a moderate Episcopacy as I am here defending, and therefore they never intended the exclusion of this by covenant.

After the same author saith, As we have prelacy to be aware of, so we have the contrary extreme to avoid; and the church's peace, if it may be so

procured, and as we must not take down the ministry, lest it prepare men for Episcopacy, so neither must we be against any profitable use and exercise of the ministry, or desirable order amongst them, for fear of introducing prelacy, &c.

There is another that has wrote a treatise on purpose, and that zealous enough, concerning the obligation of the league and covenant, under the name of Theophilus Timercus, and yet therein it is expressly asserted, that however at first view it might appear, that the parliament had renounced all Episcopacy, yet, upon exacter inquiry, it was evident to the author, that that very scruple was made by some members in parliament, and resolved, with the consent of their brethren in Scotland, that the covenant was only intended against prelacy, as it was then in being in England, leaving a latitude for Episcopacy, &c.

It would be noted, that when that covenant was framed, there was no Episcopacy at all in being in Scotland, but in England only; so that the extirpation of that frame only could then be merely intended.

Likewise it would be considered of, though there is in Scotland at present the name of dean and chapter and commissaries; yet that none of these do exercise at all any part of the discipline under that name, neither any other, as chancellor or surrogate, &c. by delegation from bishops, with total exclusion of the community of presbyters from all power and share in it, which is the greatest point of difference between that model and this with us, and imports so much as to the main of discipline.

I do not deny that the generality of the people, even of ministers in Scotland, when they took the covenant, did understand that article, as against all Episcopacy whatsoever, even the most moderate; especially if it should be restored under the express name of bishops and archbishops, never considering how different the nature and model, and

way of exercising it, might be thought on under these names; and that the due regulating of the thing is much more to be regarded, than either the returning or altering the name; but though they did not then consider any such thing, yet certainly it concerns them now to consider it, when it is represented to them, that not only the words of the oath itself do very genuinely consist with such a qualified and distinctive sense; but that the very composers and imposers of it, or a considerable part of them, did so understand and intend it; and unless they can make it appear, that the Episcopacy now in question with us in Scotland, is either contrary to the word of God, or to that mitigated sense of their own oath, it would seem more suitable to christian charity and moderation, rather to yield to it, as tolerable at least, than to continue so inflexibly to their first mistakes, and excessive zeal for love of it, as to divide from the church, and break the bond of peace.

It may likewise be granted, that some learned men in England, who have refused to take the covenant, did possibly except against that article of it as signifying the total renunciation and abolition of Episcopacy, and seeing that it was the real event and consequence of it, and they having many other strong and weighty reasons for refusing it, it is no wonder that they were little curious to enquire what past amongst the contrivers of it, and what distinction or different senses, either the words of that article might admit, or those contrivers might intend by them.

And the truth is, that, besides many other evils, the iniquity and unhappiness of such oaths, and covenants lie much in this, that being commonly framed by persons that even amongst themselves, are not fully of one mind, but have their different opinions and interests to serve (and it was so even in this) they commonly patched up so many several articles and clauses, and those too of so versatile

and ambiguous terms, that they prove most wretched snares and thickets of briars and thorns to the consciences of those who are engaged in them, and matter of endless contentions and disputes amongst them, about the true sense and intendment, and the ties and obligations of those doubtful clauses, especially in such alterations and revolutions of affairs, as always may, and often do, even within few years, follow after them, for the models and productions of such devices are not usually long-lived. And whatsoever may be said for their excuse in whole or in part, who (in yielding to the power that pressed it, and the general opinion of this church at that time) did take that covenant in the most moderate and least schismatical sense that the terms can admit; yet I know not what can be said to clear them of a very great sin, that not only framed such an engine, but violently imposed it upon all ranks of men; not ministers and other public persons only, but the whole body and community of the people, thereby engaging such droves of poor ignorant persons to they know not what, and (to speak freely) to such a hodge-podge of things of various concernments, religious and civil, as church discipline and government, the privileges of parliaments, and liberties of subjects, and condign punishment of malignants, things hard enough for the wisest and learnedest to draw the just lines of, and to give plain definitions and decisions of them, and therefore certainly, as far off from the reach of poor country people's understanding, as from the true interest of their souls, and yet to tie them by a religious oath, either to know all, or to contend for them blindfold, without knowing of them. Where will there be instanced a greater oppression and tyranny over consciences than this? Certainly, they that now govern in this church cannot be charged with any thing near or like unto it; for whatsoever they require of intrants to the ministry, they require nei-

ther subscriptions nor oaths of ministers already entered, and far less of the whole body of the people. And it were ingenuously done to take some notice of any point of moderation, or whatsoever else is really commendable, even in those we account our greatest enemies, and not to take any party in the world, for the absolute standard and unfailing rule of truth and righteousness in all things.

A

SERMON

PREACHED TO THE

CLERGY.

A SERMON, &c.

2 Cor. v. 20.

Now then we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us; we pray you in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled unto God.

IT *is appointed unto all men once to die, and after that come to judgment*, saith the author to the Hebrews. Two sad necessities to sinful man. This last, nature's light discovers not; but the other, though it be seldom deep in our thoughts, is almost always before our eyes: and though few seriously remember it, yet none can be ignorant of it. Against this known and universal evil, the chief of heathen moralists, the stoics, have much endeavoured to arm themselves; and others have bent the strength of their wits to master the fear of death, and have made themselves and some of their hearers conquerors in imagination: but when the king of terrors really appeared, he dashed their stout resolutions, and turned all their big words and looks into appalment.

And the truth is, there are no reasonings in the world able to argue a man into a willingness to part with a present being, without some hopes at least of one more happy; nor will any contentedly dislodge, though they dwell never so meanly, except upon terms of changing for the better.

The christian then (not nominal, but truly such)

is the only man that can look death immediately in the face; for he knows assuredly that he shall remove to *a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens.*

This discourse beginning this chapter, occasioned by the end of the former, continues to the 12th verse, where the apostle subjoins an apology for his high and confident manner of speaking; which apology serves likewise for a very pertinent reentry to the main discourse of the former chapter, concerning the worth and work of the ministry. But because of the apostle's frequent, yet seasonable digressions, proleptic and exegetic, divers may model the analysis after divers manners.

To take then the discourse as it lies here together, abstract from precedent and consequent, I think (with submission) it may be divided into these two heads:

First, The apostle's resolution for death.

Secondly, His course and manner of life; each supported with their proper grounds or reasons: the former to verse 9, the other to the end of the chapter.

The resolution is so strong, that he expresses it by the words of earnest desiring and groaning; and this resolution for death, springs from his assurance of life after death: *We know that if our earthly house of this tabernacle were dissolved, we have a building of God, not made with hands, eternal in the heavens.* He speaks in his own and his colleagues names; and the whole matter of both is set forth by an elegant continued metaphor. Both the desire, and assurance causing it is illustrated by their chief cause, verse 5. *Now he that hath wrought us for the self same thing is God; who also hath given unto us the earnest of the Spirit.* Both in his gracious purpose for this, hath he made us, and in a pledge of performance he hath given us earnest, even his Spirit. Then by their subordinate cause, faith, verse 7. *For we walk by faith, not by sight.*

His course and purpose; for he both signifieth what he doth, and how he intends to continue to do.

His course and purpose of life is, in general, to walk acceptably in this absence from the Lord, ver. 9. And in particular walking diligently and faithfully in the ministry, ver. 11. 18.

One reason of this course and purpose is implied in that illative (ΔΙΟ) which knits this part with the former. And indeed a good frame of life, hath a most necessary connection with a strong resolution for death, and assurance of life eternal; and they mutually cause one another. That a pious life gives strength against death, and hope of eternal life, none will deny: nor is it less true, that that assurance animates and stirs up to obedience; so far is it from causing sloth, that it is the only spur to acceptable walking, *We are confident*, saith he, ver. 8, *wherefore we labour to be accepted.* ver. 9.

This purpose is farther backed with a double reason, viz. of two pious affections: the one of fear, ver. 11. the other of love, ver. 14. That of fear, arising from the consideration of the judgment seat of Christ; that of love from the thoughts of his death, ver. 14. *For that love of God constraineth us, because we thus judge, that if one died for all, then were all dead. And he died for all, that they which live, should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto him which died for them, and rose again.* These are the reasons that stir up this eminent apostle to a study of acceptable walking in all things, particularly in his especial calling, the ministry of reconciliation. Approving himself therein to his God, and as much as may be to the consciences of the people; saying and doing all things with intention of his glory and their good; free from vainglory; not speaking for himself, nor living to himself; but to him that died for him, and rose again. Not possessed with carnal respects touching himself or others; no, nor entertaining carnal considera-

tions of Christ himself, as being ascended, and therefore to be considered and conversed with after a new manner (spiritually) by all those that are new creatures in him, and reconciled to God by him, through the ministry of the word of reconciliation; which reconciliation God himself hath thus effected, *He hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him.* Who knew no sin practically, knew none; altogether free from sin, not only from commission and consent, but from the very first and least motions of sin. And indeed none was thus fit to be made sin, but one who knew none, an immaculate Lamb: made him not by constraint, not beside his knowledge and consent. The heathens observed, that their sacrifices were successless and unhappy, when the beasts came unwillingly to the altar. We need not fear in this point; our blessed sacrifice, that was also priest and altar, offered himself up chearfully: *Then saith he, Lo, I come to do thy will*[m]. *And I lay down my life, saith the good Shepherd*[n]. *To be sin*; not only to take the similitude of sinful flesh, becoming man for man's sake, and to be *numbered with transgressors*, as the prophet speaks, *and to bear the sin of many*[o], but the imputed guilt and inflicted punishment of sin; and these sins of many made him imputatively an exceedingly great sinner, and therefore said to have been *made sin*, by reason of this imputation; whereupon followed his suffering as a sacrifice. And I conceive, that the reason why the word that in the first language signifies sin, is sometimes taken for the sacrifice is, because the confessed sins as it were, in a manner, transferred and laid upon the heads of the legal sacrifices: and so saith the prophet, *He hath laid on him the iniquity of us all*[p].

He was then made sin primarily by imputation of, and consequently by suffering for, our sins, as our

[m] Heb. x. 7. [n] John x. 11. [o] Isa. liii. 12. [p] Is. liii. 6.

expiatory sacrifice. *He made him sin for us,* in our stead, and for our good; to wit, our redemption, as follows, *that we might be made,* or become γινώμενοι, but be it made λινώμεθα, it is no otherwise than Christ was made sin imputatively: and if this inference need help, each word that follows will confirm it. Righteousness, not righteous; to shew the perfection of it, not to urge its unity. Righteousness, not righteousnesses; as intimating that it is but one righteousness, whereby we are all justified of God; not our own, in him, not in ourselves. All which makes it clear, as it were written with the sun-beams, that by the most gracious exchange, as he took our sins, he hath given us his righteousness. It is true, this is always accompanied with holiness inherent, but imperfect. By that imputed righteousness, the spouse of Christ is clear as the sun, all luminous; but in regard of infused righteousness, she is only fair as the moon; but the one half light, and that appearing unequally too, waxing and waning, and having spots at its fulness here below. She is holy in this regard, but righteousness in the other righteousness of God; his by appointing, his by gift and application, and his by acceptance of God in him; that is, its being in him who is called *the Lord our righteousness*; in him, in whom the Father acquiesceth, and is well pleased: *Blessed are they that trust in him.*

But to the former, ver. 20. *Now then we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us; we pray you in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled unto God,*

Here we have all the parties requisite in the treaty of reconciliation. God, though offended, seeking peace with men, his creatures, and by sin become rebels; *as though God beseeched you.* Christ the only procurer, and likewise the chief ambassador of this peace. And then lastly have we the sub-delegated messengers of this peace, *We, as ambassadors for Christ.* We the apostles and all the ministers of the

gospel: for as in their peculiarities they had no successors, for that is repugnant: so in these things wherein they have successors, all true ministers of the word are such. The apostle himself calls this embassy *the ministry of reconciliation*, ver. 18. Ambassadors for Christ, that is, in his stead. In this verse we have the office of the ministry under the name of ambassadors; and their message, the delivery whereof is the execution of their office, entreaty of men to be reconciled to God. Both the office and message backed with due authority or warrant; the office's warrant is, we are ambassadors for Christ, or in his stead, that is, subordinate to him by his own ordination: the warrant of the message is God's own will that sent them, for it is his mind to beseech you by us.

But to resume the first division, whereof each of its two parts will afford its proposition; and upon these two propositions I shall insist in what remains to be said.

The first proposition is this, from the office; ministers of the gospel are true ambassadors under Christ from God to man. As soon as man had divested himself of God's image, his shameful nakedness made him run into the thickets; nor could he ever since then look his Maker directly in the face, nor endure to hear his immediate voice: therefore when God himself would come and dwell among men, he vailed his deity with human flesh; there he stood behind the wall, and shewed himself through the lattices. *Let us not hear again the voice, nor let us see this great fire any more, that we die not*, said the people at Horeb; and the Lord, that knew their mould, said, *they had said well: I will raise them up a prophet* (saith he) *from among their brethren like unto thee*; and he did so. As he came for man's good, so for the same end went he away again: *It is expedient for you* (saith he) *that I go away*[1]. And since that time he hath continued to

[1] John xvi. 7.

send men, men yet liker themselves than he was; man subject to like infirmities, sin not excepted. *Even as my Father sent me, so send I you*[m], (saith he). But the loss in this change were intolerable, did he not allay it somewhat by sending his Spirit upon those men whom he sends to men: *If I depart, I will send him unto you*[n], (saith he). He is gone indeed, as was necessary, but being ascended, he caused gifts to descend upon men: *Some he gave to be apostles, some prophets, and some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers; all for the work of the ministry, and that for the perfecting the saints, and edifying of his body*[o].

Thus then God treats with man in a human way, draws not his own to him by immediate revelations, nor rejects he the rest by express words from heaven; but while he sends his ambassadors indifferently to both, works differently in them. And the admirable variety of effects of the same message, after the same manner, and at the same time delivered, do not a little set forth and commend that same πολυποίκιλος σοφια του Θεου, *the manifold wisdom of God.*

That his word should sweetly melt the hearts of some, and, as it were, more violently break the hearts of others, harden and blind some, mollify and enlighten others; convince those whom yet it converts not, and by its majesty (though in the mouths of simple men) it should bridle and restrain many of all ranks whom it renews not; moulding and framing them to an external conformity and square carriage, whereby the world, and the church of God in it especially, is much advantaged. And the lustre of all these effects is exceedingly set off by the quality of the messengers, being but to the world's eye contemptible men. But had it not been more congruous to thegrandeur of this great King, to have sent angels, his ministering spirits, to be the ministers of

[m] John xx. 21. [n] John xvi. 7. [o] Eph. iv. 11, 12,

the word? Had he not better have used those precious vessels for his chief treasure, than to have concredited it to vessels of earth, not to say discredit it by so doing? No, his thoughts are not as ours; yea, they are farthest above ours when they seem to be farthest below them. And if we look again, we shall find it more glorious to have conquered so many kingdoms, and brought them to our King, the Lord Jesus, by the preaching of a few fishermen, and such like, than if he had done it by those active spirits. The meanest of the means raises exceedingly the glory of the sovereign's cause.

Thus we see how the sending of men in this embassy was requisite for the frailty of man, and how well it suits with the glory of God.

APPLICATION.

HENCE may be deduced some necessary things for all in general, something in particular for these ambassadors, and something for those to whom they are sent.

1. First, it may persuade all to entertain more respectful thoughts of this function than most men do. Some speak out their disrespect; others, though not expressing it in words, have it lurking in their breasts, and appearing in their practices. To instance in one error or two, that many labour under, springing evidently from a low esteem of this calling; are there not divers pretenders to it, that being (and possibly finding themselves) insufficient for all other employments, have their recourse to this, making no doubt of their sufficiency for it? Yea, such then are too many; their worldly friends being guilty either of begetting in them, or of fomenting this presumption. On the other side, be there not others that, having some advantage of outward rank, or inward indowments, would think

themselves, and be thought by those that have interest in them, to be exceedingly disparaged if this calling were mentioned to them; and would count it a great abasing, yea, a losing of themselves to embrace it. Against these two gross mistakes, may very appositely be opposed this; we are ambassadors for Christ: from which expresion it is most evident, that the ministry both requires the best and ablest, and deserves them; that the refuse and abjects of men cannot be worthy of it, nor it unworthy of the choicest. It requires able men, because they are to be ambassadors; and this will follow of itself. Again, consider whose ambassadors, and in what business? The ambassadors of the King of kings, in the weighty matter of treating peace betwixt him and mankind. Shall it be said of his ambassadors, as Cato said to those who were sent by the Romans to Bythinia, counting three wants were amongst them, viz. that they had neither feet, nor head, nor heart?

It is true God may (and sometimes, especially in extraordinary times) make use of unlettered and low qualified men; but then he inlays their defects by singular supply: therefore that is no rule for us in ordinary vocation. It is a piece of God's prerogative to use unlikely means without disadvantage; any thing is a fit instrument in his hands; but we are to choose the fittest and best means, both in our own affairs, and in his service; and if in any, this eminent service of embassy requires a special choice. If bodily integrity was requisite in the servers at the altar under the law, shall we think that the mentally blind and lame are good enough for the ministration under the gospel, which exceeds in worth and glory? Who is sufficient for these things? saith the great doctor of the Gentiles. Our practices seem to answer, Any body. And it is observable, that carelessness in this kind, is usually the companion of false worship, and too much care of decking, trimming, and making gay the externals of it. It is said of Jeroboam, that

he made high places, but priests of the lowest of the people. As he said of golden cups and wooden priests, we may say of that church which values them so much, They are well looked to, neatly adorned, but their priests grossly ignorant.

This function requires able men, being a weighty charge, and is worthy of them, being highly honourable; and doubtless there is egregious profaneness in the contrary thoughts. The heathen can stile those stones more happy than common ones, that are chosen for the building of temples; and amongst these, the altar-stones are happiest. And shall we not account truly happy those living stones, that are hewn out for God's building, and chiefly (so to speak) the altar-stones, the messengers of peace? What can be more honourable than to serve the highest Lord in the chiefest functions of his house? How ought we to account of an ambassador's place, when King David esteemed so highly of a door-keeper's office in this King's court.

2. We are ambassadors. This may correct another error in the world, though accounted by those that entertain it, a choice piece of policy for God. It is this: the ministry being so mean a thing in the world's eye, and so obnoxious to contempt, it is expedient it be raised and brought into credit by annexed excessive dignities, high titles of honour, and suitable revenues. It is true, that penury and want of competency in temporals, in those that bring an eternal treasure, argues base ingratitude, and is most unworthy of well constituted churches; but where the remedy exceeds too far, it becomes worse than the disease, being compounded of carnal prudence and ambition, both of which are enmity to God. And this I take to have been one of Germany's provoking sins, and Rome's predominant sin. For these incongruous honours, to speak it in a word, raising some from contempt, teach them to contemn and insult over their brethren; to say nothing of their affronting of higher quality,

yea, of princes and kings themselves, while they pretend to be the only supporters of their crowns. And if this their insolency in advancement devolve them back again in contempt, and their honour become their shame, they may thank themselves. Their Master taught them another method of attaining due esteem: he hath given honour enough to those whom he hath made his ambassadors; and if men contemn this, he takes the indignity as done to himself, and he is able enough to vindicate his own honour. Let men esteem of us as the ministers of Christ; here is all the esteem St. Paul requires, and they are unworthy of this that are not content with it. Their best way, whom God employs, is to study his glory, and he will not fail to honour those that honour him. And this leads me fitly in from the conviction of these common errors, to a word of particular exhortation to those ambassadors, from the nature of their calling so expressed. And it binds upon them chiefly these four duties: 1. Piety; 2. Prudence; 3. Fidelity; 4. Magnanimity.

First, piety in two steps or degrees: first, to look they be friends with God; secondly, to labour to be inward with him. First to look they be friends with God; for it no way suits that they be ambassadors for reconciliation, that are not themselves reconciled; it is certain such will move both coldly and successlessly in the work. What he can do extraordinarily, that doth always what he wills in heaven and earth, we question not. He can convey grace by those to whom he gives none; he can cause them to carry this treasure, and have no share in it; carry the letter and not know what is in it; and make them, so to speak, equivocal causes of conversion.

But usually he converts those whom he makes the happy strengtheners of their brethren. We think, that they who savingly know not Christ, should not be fit to make other men acquainted with him,

He that can tell men what God hath done for his soul, is the likeliest to bring their souls to God: hardly can he speak to the heart, that speaks not from it. *Si vis me flere*, &c. Before the cock crows to others, he claps his wings, and rouzes up himself. How can a frozen-hearted preacher warm his hearers hearts, and enkindle them with the love of God? But he whom the love of Christ constrains, his lively recommendations of Christ, and speeches of love, shall sweetly constrain others to love him. Above all loves, it is most true of this, that none can speak sensibly of it, but they that have felt it. Our most exquisite pulpit-orators, yea, speak they with the tongues of men and angels, without the experience of this love, are no fit ambassadors for Christ, for his embassy is a love-treaty. Such men are but sounding brass, and tinkling cymbals; the sublimest and best contrived of their discourses, glow-worm like, or as those foolish fires, may have some light with them, heat they have none. When a man speaks of reconciliation and happiness, as if he had some interest therein himself, when his words are animated with affection; as he is like to beget some affection where there is none, so a pious hearer that is already gained to Christ, finds the embassy drawing him effectually nearer heaven; blowing that divine fire that is within him, and causing it to mount upwards. *As in water, face answereth to face, so doth the heart of man to man*, saith the wise man[k]; there is a certain peculiar sympathy and sweet correspondence betwixt souls that lodge the same spirit; those that are united to the same head, Christ, by reconciliation, find their hearts agreed, and they relish the discourses one of another.

Thus important is it every way, both for begetting and strengthening of grace, that the ambassador thereof be a reconciled person. As he must look that he be friends with God, so he must labour also

[k] Prov. xxvii. 19.

to be inward with God; for though the embassy be the same in great part in the mouths of all God's ambassadors, yet there is a world of mysterious particulars contained in it, and they meet with many intricate pieces in their particular treaties with mens consciences; and in these know they the will of the King their master more or less clearly, according as they are more or less intimate with him. How knew divine Moses so much of the Lord's will, but by much converse with him?

These ambassadors, to the end that they may do so, must labour for integrity. His secret is with the righteous: for humility; he is familiar indeed with the lowly; he takes up house with them: *With such a one will I dwell, saith the Lord.* God's choice acquaintance are humble men. For the spirit of meekness; he we named was eminent in this, and so in familiarity with God. Christ singularly loves the meek and lowly, they are so like himself. One thing they must mainly take heed of, if they aspire to a holy familiarity with God; earthly-mindedness. If no servant of the god of mammon can serve this God in point of common service, how much less can he be fit for an eminent employment as an embassay, and enjoy intimacy requisite for that employment? These messengers should come near the life of angels; always beholding the face of the Father of lights; but if their affections be engaged to the world, their faces will still be that way. Fly high they may, sometimes in some speculations of their own; but like the eagle, for all their soaring, their eye will still be upon some prey, some carrion here below. Upright, meek, humble and heavenly-minds, then, must the ambassadors of this great king have, and so obtain his intimacy, mounting upon those wings of prayer and meditation, and having the eye of faith upwards. Thus shall they learn more of his choice mysteries in one hour, than by many days poring upon casuists and schoolmen, and such like. This ought to be

done, I confess; but above all, the other must not be omitted. Their chief study should be that of their commission, the holy scriptures. The way to speak skilfully from God, is often to hear him speak. *The Lord hath given me the tongue of the learned*, saith the evangelic prophet, (chiefly intending Christ) *to speak a word in due season to the weary*. (Aye, that is the learnedest tongue when all is done.) But how?—*Thou wakenest me morning by morning, thou wakenest mine ear to hear as the learned*[c].

Thus we see how these ambassadors have need to be friends, and intimate friends with their Lord. For if they be much with God in the mount, their returns to men will be with brightness in their faces, and the law in their hands their lives, and their doctrine, shall be heavenly.

2. The second requisite of these ambassadors is prudence, or dexterity to manage their Master's business. Wise princes and states, in chusing their ambassadors, above all other kind of learning have respect to practical abilities; and they that can best read the several geniuses and dispositions of several nations and particular men, and accordingly know how to treat with every one according to their temper, to speak to them in their own language, are judged the fittest men for that employment. Great is the diversity of humours among men: some are timorous, some rash, some avaricious, some ambitious, some slow and leaden, others precipitant and mercurial, and many other varieties. Now to know how to deal with each of these in their own kind, for the advancemement of his master's business, is a special discretion in an ambassador. And those ambassadors we speak of, had as much need of it as any: they have men of all, both of outward and inward differences, to deal with; and the same men so different from themselves at divers times,

[c] Isaiah l. 4.

that they are hardly the same: some ignorant, others learned; some weak, others strong; some secure with false presumptions, others tormented with false fears: and much prudent consideration of those differences, and accommodating themselves thereunto in the matter and manner of their discourses, is very expedient in their treaties: some with compassion plucking them out of the fire, making a difference. What other is St. Paul's becoming all things to all men, that he might win some? And this policy is far different from temporising, and compliance with evil, which in no case can be tolerated in these ambassadors, for that is disadvantageous to their business: it may be the way of their own promotion, but it is not the way to advance their Master's kingdom, which end should be the square of all their contrivances, and with it nothing will suit but what is upright. A kind of guile they may use, but it must carry their King's impress; it must be a holy guile, and such the ministers of the gospel not only may, but ought to study. Fishers of men they are, and why may they not use certain baits, and diversity of them? But as their catching is not destructive, but saving, so must all their baits be. They must quarter dove-like simplicity and serpentine wisdom together, as he commanded them that sent them on this embassy.

3. Their third duty is fidelity; and that both in the matter of their embassy, and in the manner of delivering it. In the matter, they must look to their commission, and declare the whole counsel of God, not adding nor abating any thing. We know how heinously kings take the presumption of their ambassadors in this kind, though reason be pretended, and perhaps justly; yet even they account obedience better than sacrifice; yea, some of them have been so precise and tender of their prerogative, that they have preferred a damageable affront to their commands, before a profitable breach of them. And above all kings, this King that is above them all,

hath good reason to be punctual in this: for princes' instructions may be imperfect, and as things may fall out, prejudicial to their purpose; but his are most complete, and always suitable to his end, that they cannot be bettered. The matter, then, of this embassy is unalterable, in that these ambassadors must be faithful. Faithful also in the manner of delivering it, with singleness and diligence; with singleness free from by-respects, not seeking their own honour or advantage, but their Master's; abasing themselves where need is, that he may be magnified; never hazarding the least part of his rights for the greatest benefit that could accrue to themselves. The treachery of an ambassador is of all most intolerable;—to deceive under trust. If any that bear the name of God's legates, think to deceive him, they deceive themselves, he cannot be mocked; they must all appear before his judgment-seat, and be unveiled before men and angels. Knowing therefore the terrors of the Lord, let them go about his work with candour and singleness of heart, and with diligence. *He that is diligent in his work, shall stand before princes*[m], saith the wise prince.

The great Prince of peace shall admit those to stand eminently before him, that are diligent in his embassy of peace. Such are they that make it their meat and their drink, as Christ himself did; that accept all occasions, yea, seek and make occasions, to treat with men for God. That oracle-like preaching of one sermon or two in a year, is far from this sedulity and instancy in treating, that is requisite in God's ambassadors. The prince of darkness hath more industrious agents than so; they compass sea and land to make a proselyte; they hold to it, and are content to lose many a labour, that some one may prosper.

And this may meet with the discontent that some ministers take at their great pains and little success.

[m] Prov xxii. 29.

We see satan's ministers can comport with this. Since it is no just exception against God's work, still be in thy business, and refer the issue to thy Master: *Wait on God, and do good*[b]; saith the royal Psalmist. *Sow thy seed in the morning, and in the evening withold not thy hand; for thou knowest not which will prosper*[c], saith the wise son. As the moralist speaks of benefits, a man must lose many words among the people, that some one may not be lost: *I am all things to all*, saith our apostle, *that I may gain some*[d]. And though in continuing diligent, thy diligence should still continue fruitless to others, to thee it shall not be so; thy God is a discreet Lord: as he hath not put events into thy hand, he will not exact them at thy hands; thou art to be accountable for planting and watering, but not for the increase; be not wanting in thy task, and thou shalt not want thy recompence. Shouldest thou be forced to say with the prophet, *I have laboured in vain, and spent my strength for nought*[e], in regard of success, yet if thou hast laboured,—so laboured as to spend thy strength in that service, thou must add with him, *Yet surely my judgment is with the Lord, and my work with my God.*

4. The last duty recommendable to these ambassadors, is *Magnanimity*, which is no les needful than the preceding. Many a difficulty and discouragement is to be encountered in this service, and, which is worse, some temptations of prosperity and advancement. If you persist to plead freely for your Master, you shall be the very mark of the world's enmity. What mischief is there that Christ hath not foretold his disciples to expect at their hands? For Christ circumvents no man to his service; he tells them what they shall meet with: They shall prosecute you through their courts, ecclesiastical and civil; deliver you up to councils, and scourge you

[b] Psalm xxxvii. 3. [c] Eccles. xi. 6. [d] 1 Cor. ix. 20.
[e] Isaiah xlix. 4.

in synagogues, and accuse before governors and kings; yea, they shall think they do God good service when they kill you, his own ambassadors. Many mountains are to be climbed in going this embassy, and the rage of many a tempest to be endured. *Hic animis opus est, et pectore firmo.* Courage, then, ambassadors of the Most High; see if you can rise above the world, and tread upon her frownings with the one foot, and her deceitful smilings with the other; slight her proffers, and contemn likewise her contempts. There is honour enough in the employment, to cause you to answer all oppositions with disdain. Let it be as impossible to turn you aside from your integrity, as the sun from its course; for that message which you carry shall be glorious in the end, it shall conquer all opposite powers. When you seem exposed in your voyage to the fury of winds and waves, remember what you carry; *Cæsarum vehis, et fortunam ejus*; as he said, it cannot suffer shipwreck. Let no sufferings dismay you; for a generous ambassador will always account it far more honourable to suffer the worst things for doing the best service he can to his master, than to enjoy the world's best rewards for the least point of disloyalty. And if ever Master was worthy the suffering for, your's is. Happy are you when they persecute you for his sake, as himself hath told. There are honourable examples to look back to; *So did they to the prophets*; and a precious recompense to look forward to; *Great is your reward in heaven*[m]. Our blessed Redeemer refused no hardships for the working this peace, which is your embassy; he knew what entertainment did abide him in the world, what contempts would be put upon him by mankind, which he came to redeem; he knew of the full cup of his Father's wrath, that he was to drink for them; yet resolution arising from

[m] Matt. v. 19. [n] Acts xx. 22, 25.

love, climbed over all these mountains, and happily conquering all these difficulties, attained the desired end. Worthy ambassadors, follow this generous leader in promulgating the peace he hath purchased; tread his steps that endured the cross and despised the shame, and your journey's end shall be suitable to his who is set down at the right hand of the Father. Well did St. Paul study this copy when he said, *I know that bonds abide me every where; but I care for none of these things, so I may finish my course with joy*[n]." The looking over that great end, is the great means of surmounting the hardest things that intervenes. The eyeing of that much, will make an undaunted ambassador: and that this lesson of courage is very pertinent for them, will appear by Christ's own urging it upon the first legates he sent out, when he dwelt here below: *Fear not*, saith he, *them that can kill the body*[o], &c. where methinks he propounds, as the chief incentive of courage to these ambassadors, the joint consideration of those to whom they are sent, and of him that sends them: for seriously considered, it must needs be found most incongruous, that ambassadors of God should be afraid to speak to men. Fear not them; the utmost they can do reacheth no farther than the tabernacles of clay; nor can they touch that without permission, not a hair of their head falls without notice of their Master. But suppose the highest, let them kill the body; thither goes their rage, and no farther: but fear him that can kill both body and soul; fear not, but fear. As this fear hath better cause, so it is the only expelling cause of the other fear. Nothing begets so generous and undaunted spirits as the fear of God; no other fear, none of those base ones that torment worldly men, dare claim room where that fear lodgeth. The only cause of these legates fears, is the inconsideration of

[n] Acts xx. 22—25. [o] Matt. x. 28.

their Master; would they remember him much, it would ennoble their spirits to encounter the hardest evils of life and death itself couragcously in his service. Their reward is preserved for them and they for it; yea, it alone puts them into full possession; for their Master, beyond all kings, hath this privilege, he can not only restore life lost in his service, but for a life subject to death, yea, a dying life, immortality; and for their sufferings, light and momentary, an eternal weight of glory. Let them be impoverished in his service, it is the best bargain in the world to lose all for him. Let them be scourged and stigmatized for the ignominy of these sufferings, the spirit of glory shall rest upon them. If that Persian prince could so prize his Zopyrus, that was mangled for his service, how much more will this Lord esteem those that suffer so for him? He is the tenderest King over his servants in the world. They that touch them, touch the apple of his eye. Let his messengers, then, despise the worst the world can do against them; yea, let them say of death as he said of it to his adversaries, Anytus and Melitus, *Kill me they may, but they cannot hurt me.*

The lessons to those to whom they are sent, are, first of not indignifying them. Remember David and the king of Ammon. No king resents this so much as God: *He that despiseth you, despiseth me.*

2. Secondly, slight not their message; know whence it comes. This not discerning of holy things is the pest of Christians: the apostle specifieth it in the Lord's body; it is so in the Lord's word; he condescends, in using earthly creatures, to explain the choicest of heavenly mysteries; and earthen vessels to convoy these treasures. And if that which he intended for their advantage, the wretched sons of men make it a stumbling-block; and if they contemn the grace, for the meanness of the persons that are made conveyors and instruments of it, what may they expect?

3. Thirdly, respect even the ambassadors for his sake they represent, *counting them worthy of double honour;* for this is the will of your Lord and their Lord, your King and their King. And to this King immortal, be all honour, and glory, and praise, by all the churches, world without end. Amen.

GOD'S END AND DESIGN

IN

AFFLICTION.

SERMON I.

HOSEA v. 15.

I will go and return to my place till they acknowledge their offence, and seek my face; in their affliction they will seek me early.

THERE is nothing we more hardly learn, and whereof we have more need to be taught, than to judge aright concerning our own dealing with God, and God's dealing with us; to know and acknowledge the perverseness and folly of our ways, and wisdom and goodness of his ways; therefore the sermons of the prophets insist much on this, to convince the people of God, to whom they were sent, of both these; and by this, to persuade them to repentance. This is evidently here the prophet's aim. The whole chapter, with the following, contains a pathetic remonstrance of God's just quarrel with his people, aggravated by much long-suffering and lenity, and many warnings verbal and real on his part, and much stubbornness, impenitence, and multiplied provocation on theirs: he using all means to reclaim and save them, and they using all means to despise him and ruin themselves. The plea is against both the kingdoms of Israel and Judah.

In these words we have the Lord, after much reasoning and trial of milder ways, which prevailed not with them, concluding upon a severe course, as being found necessary, and such as would be more effectual for their conversion.

I will go.] These words contain those three things: 1st. The procuring cause of God's afflicting his people. 2ndly. His way of afflicting them. 3dly. The

end of it. The procuring cause is made up of these two—sin and impenitence. *I will go till they acknowledge their offences.* So that, if they had not committed those provoking sins, or, having commited them, had humbly acknowledged or repented of them, this labour of afflicting them had been saved; but these sins once committed and often repeated, and their being not so much as once acknowledged, and all this by God's own peculiar people, cannot but draw on heavy afflictions.

1st. We may see how unwilling God is to afflict his people. Judgments are termed, *his strange work*, but *mercy is his darling attribute.*

When God exercises punitive acts against his people, the scripture represents, as it were, a kind of reluctance and struggling in his bowels. *How shall I smite thee, O Ephraim, and how shall I give thee up O Manasseh, my repentings are begun already.* He delights in their prosperity, and hath given them a rule, by which if they walk, peace shall be upon them. He hath made them laws, which, being observed, will bring heaps of blessings upon them; as we find what a multitude of favours attended it[a]. *I will give you rain;* and a little after, *I will give you peace in the land, and ye shall live and none shall make you afraid:*—but what is all that opposed to the affliction here threatened, of God's withdrawing himself[b]? *I will walk amongst you, I will be your God and ye shall be my people.* He will not leave them, unless they drive him away; yea, and he is even loath to leave them, and grieved that they are such enemies to themselves, and will not be persuaded to be better advised.

2dly. We see where the true blame of the many sufferings and miseries of the church is to be found; the abounding of sin, and want of repentance. These make her troubles to abound. If God's own people would take his counsel it would be well for

[a] Levit 26.—Deut. 28, 29 [b] Deut. xxvi. 12

them; either his first counsel of *obedience,* or his after counsel of *repentance.* When they are running from him, he calls after them, "*Return, return, O backsliding Israel, Why will ye die.* Says the Lord by the same prophet, *Thou hast destroyed thyself, but in me is thy help* to be found. His counsel and ways would be peace; but their afflictions and sharp punishments are the fruit of their own ways; *bitter fruit and wormwood—a root of bitterness*[c]. Doth not the preaching of the word, and particularly the doctrine of repentance, sufficiently witness for God and against his people; when their rebellion brings calamities upon them? The often repeated warnings and entreaties, even to those who have often slighted and despised them, shews how unwillingly he afflicts us. He does not surprize them, without warnings multiplied one upon another. Before he would proceed to treat them as enemies, to hew and slay them with the sword, he uses his messengers of peace to deal first with the word, sharply indeed, but graciously;—that sword of the spirit, which kills to make alive; to spare, if it might be, the destroying sword of the enemy. *I have hewn them by my prophets,* and if that would have served their turn, the other hewing and slaying should not have followed. A wise enemy, who is resolved to be avenged, conceals his rage till it be accomplished, and does not threaten before he strikes; but makes the execution of his purpose the first revealing of it. Therefore, we may know that God, who doth all things most wisely, intends favor in threatening; denounces indignation that he may be interrupted not to inflict it. That is his desire. He would gladly have us stay his hand. A humble penitent acknowledgment will do. "Minatur ne cædat, cædit ne occidat;" says Chrysostom. *He threatens that he may not strike, and strikes that he may not destroy.* If speaking either mildly

[c] Prov. i. Jer. ii. 19.

or sharply will prevail with his children; he will not stir the rod to them; and when the rod is in his hand, if shewing or shaking it will serve the turn, he will not strike with it. But this is our folly, that usually we abuse all this goodness, and will not part with our sins, till we smart for them, and be beaten from them. We pull punishment out of God's hand, as Solomon says, *The fools mouth calleth for strokes.* When these indulgent ways that the Lord uses avail nothing, then, as a physician, wearied in striving with lenitives and gentle medicines, in a fixt stubborn disease, that yields not to them, it is no wonder that he betake himself to sharper remedies, and cut and burn, if need be, that he may cure. The Lord's complaint, in the beginning of the 7th chapter of this prophecy, sounds this way, *When I would have healed Ephraim.* If it be thus then with the church of God, that it is often found guilty of great sins, and withal, great insensibleness and impenitence, it is no wonder that it is often found under great and many afflictions; there being in the church such societies as profess God's name, peculiar sins such as are found no where else, by reason of God's peculiar covenant with them, and ordinances among them; viz. contempt of the ordinances, and breach of the covenant, and by the same reason too, peculiar aggravations of the common sins, and ingredients of such things as makes the same sins, (which other people commit) to be of a deeper dye among God's people; their special relation to him, and the special means and mercies they receive from him, by which they are both more instructed and more obliged to obedience, these things make the disobedience more heinous in itself, and more offensive to God. He cannot but take it very ill to be disregarded by his own. Και συ τεκνον.—Thus the Lord makes a great and loud complaint that all may hear. *Isaiah,* 1st. *calls heaven and earth to hear it, that he had nourished and brought up children, and they had rebelled.* What do we deserve for our sins?

Doth not our oaths and cursing, our pride and deceit, our wonderful ignorance and profaneness, our formality, hypocrisy, and above all, our deep security, threaten us with some heavy judgment, which cannot be avoided but by godly sorrow and earnest prayer; by the most humble way of acknowledgment, and real amendment? This is our work this day; and unless we set about it for ourselves, and pray for it to the whole kingdom, we know not what we are doing. We cannot do any thing to purpose, in behalf of the church of God, nor be fit supplicants for its deliverance, whilst we remain ungodly ourselves.

I will go and return.] The way that he will afflict them is indeed the heaviest. In this expression, I will withdraw myself from them, and will not appear to them at all for a time, yea a long time. Well may it be rendered by affliction in the other clause, for they shall be truly so when I am gone from them. Upon the withdrawing of his gracious presence, as necessarily follows affliction, as mist upon the setting of the sun. This was heavier than all his corrections. So long as they could but hear and see him amongst them, although it were chiding, yea *scourging* them, yet still there was this comfort, that they might speak to him as being near them; and so considering his merciful nature might have hope, by their complaints and cries in his presence, to move him to compassionate and spare them, and be reconciled. But when he is out of sight and quite gone from them, and so could neither hear nor see them in their misery; this was indeed the chief misery, worse than all that they could suffer in other punishments. Formerly he threatens to be as a moth to them, consuming them though more slowly and insensibly, which was by lesser judgments that befel these kingdoms, as the history of them shews; then as a lion devouring more suddenly. But the gradation rises to the highest in this last, though to an ignorant creature

it sounds least.—*I will return to my place.* I will retire my favorable presence from them, and shut up all the influences and evidences of my grace—which, in a public national sense, (as here it is to be taken), imports, not only longer and more grievous troubles than any which before had befallen them, (as indeed they were) but God's leaving of them in those troubles; and not giving as before, any sign of his merciful presence. I will give them up to those miseries that are to come upon them and leave them to themselves and to their cruel enemies, and will take no notice of them, until they know what a grievous thing the want of my presence is: and how hateful their sins are, that have deprived them of it, and so be stirred up to seek my face. They would not regard me neither in my word nor in my works, either of mercy or judgment so long as I staid with them, was present amongst them, that so I may teach them to know what is the good of my presence, by the evil of my absence, which is a heavier judgment than all I have yet inflicted on them.—And as it is thus in relation to the public condition of the church, so is it in a personal and more spiritual sense to a child of God. No evil that he fears so much, or feels so heavy, as God's absenting and withdrawing himself in displeasure; nor no good that he will admit to be compared with the light of God's countenance; let others seek any good, let them have any good they can, but says David, for himself and all the godly, the good we seek is this and no other, *Lord lift upon us the light of thy countenance.* He can hear of any distress with courage and resolution, but this he cannot endure to hear of but deprecates it, *Hide not thy face from thy servant.* A godly man may in the most prosperous condition, have much concern if the face of God be hid from him. That is his great affliction, as it is here called. Their needs nothing else to damp all his prosperity: *Thou hidest thy face and I was troubled.* Even in prosperity,

riches and power, and other such poor things, do not answer the desires of a soul acquainted with God. All these are nothing without his favour shining on them. No, not the graces which are within them, which are far more precious than all outward things. The displeased withdrawing of God's countenance makes a sad night amongst all these; as when the sun is absent it is night still, notwithstanding all the stars. Although God lay outward affliction on them, yet if he enlighten them though in a dungeon, they can rejoice. Yea, when they are inwardly troubled for sin, and God is rebuking them that way, yet that is not so bad as when he leaves them, and returns to his place. This is more grievous than when he chides and rebukes them, which he may do and yet not in *hot displeasure*, as David teaches to distinguish it[d]. It is a more comfortable condition that he stay with them; and that he reprove them when they sin, (yea that is a mercy) then that he leave them, and speak not to them, nor suffer them to speak to him. They would then desire rather to find him present though correcting; for then, by speaking to him they may express their repentance, and requests to him for pardon. They would say to God, *Strike me but hear me*, rather than be struck out from all intercourse with him and he hold them as his enemies.—And thus God may sometimes deal with his own, and particularly for some notable offence, until they be duly humbled, and brought to a lowly acknowledgement, and so to seek his face again; to see if they will be loath to grieve him again.

Though we all profess to know God, yet the greatest part of us are so far from duly esteeming him, that we do not at all know what the spiritual gracious presence of God is; how sweet the enjoyment, and how bitter and sad the deprivement. O! be desirous to understand and know this highest

[d] Psalm vi.

good; and above all things seek to enjoy it. And without doubt the experience of it will persuade you to prize it and entertain it carefully; never willingly to grieve and drive away so great and so good a guest; that brings true happiness along with him to those with whom he dwells. There is solid peace, and there only where he is. And for the church of God what other thing can we, yea, what need we desire but this as the assured help of all her distresses and sorrows; that God would return his gracious presence to her again. Then shall her enemies be turned backward; and she shall sing and rejoice in the God of her salvation. You see this is the church's own prayer[e], she desires no more but this, *Cause thy face to shine and we shall be safe.* That is the only sun which chases away the mist of her griefs and troubles. So then the ending of these confusions we are lying and labouring under, is wrapt up in this; that both the presence of our God be entreated and obtained. This would make a sweet union of hearts, and make all attempts prosperous, and strike a terror into the churches' enemies. But if their rock forsake them, were they never so surely supported with other advantages, yet shall they sink and fall; if he go to his place and shut up his power and wisdom from their help, and leave them with themselves, this shall suffice to undo them without any enemy. It was not only sad news to Moses but to the whole people, notwithstanding they were bent to provoke him to do so[f], it was very grievous in them to hear, that he had refused them his own guidance, and would withdraw himself from them although it was with the promise of an angel to lead them, for little can any possible supply be made by any creature to make up that loss; it was indeed high time for them to put off their ornaments, and be humbled, when their great ornament and their great strength, was gone from

[e] Psalm lxxx. [f] Exod. xxxiii.

them in displeasure. Then they put off their rifling garbs of war, and appeared in the penetential dress of sackcloth and ashes.

3dly. The end of God's thus afflicting his people, and we have these two things to consider in it, both here clearly expressed; God's intention in the means, 2dly, The power of these means for effecting it—*I will go till they acknowledge their offences and seek my face;* and in the time of my absence, which will certainly be the time of their heaviest affliction, *They will seek me early.*

This is God's end in scourging his people. It is only to bring them to a sorrow for their offences; and ingenious confession of it. And if he withdraw himself, it is not to leave them for ever, and look at them no more. On the contrary, it is, that they may learn whether it is better to enjoy him, or their sins; and finding themselves miserable without him may leave those sins, with which he will not dwell, and may come and entreat his return to them; which he is willing, being entreated to grant them. And this he removes from them, that on their return to him, and earnest and humble seeking of his return to them, they may find him, and enjoy more of his presence than before and learn to keep it better. He throws his people into the furnace, and goes away, and leaves them there. Yet it is not to let them lie still there, but he is skilful in this work, and knows the time needful for their refining; and then returns and takes them out. His purpose is to purge away the dross, but he will not lose the gold[s]. *By this shall the iniquity of Jacob be purged, and this will serve to take away his sin.* As that sin was the meriting cause of the affliction; it clears God's justice. The end he aims at, when he declares his graciousness and mercy to his people, being no other than this, to destroy the meriting cause of the affliction, by their trouble, to take

[s] Isaiah xxvii. 9.

away that sin which procured it; and then to give them peace. That is his design. He takes no pleasure in their affliction for itself, more than they themselves do; indeed in punishing his enemies, there is pure justice; their punishments are not for a better end, so far as concerns them, but are appointed to torment them: but to his own people, his purpose is, by afflicting them only to draw them from their sins, that drive him away from them. And as we see in this, the bounty of God, so it instructs us for our own practice in the just way, both of preventing trouble to ourselves that it come not, and of removing it if it be come upon us. Is this the thing God seeks in punishing us, a sense and acknowledgement of sin committed? Then if we give him his end, he will not at all needlessly make use of the means. If therefore we either carefully shun sinful provocations, or being guilty, speedily return and humble ourselves before him, he will not enter into displeasure against us; he will be appeased towards us; and seeing that which is his intent in punishing, before he begins to punish, he is very well pleased to be thus prevented. So then, if either we follow the advice of the psalmist, *Stand in awe and sin not*, or that other which follows, that we examine our hearts concerning sin before the decree of punishment go forth, or be put in execution, on our guiltiness, pronouncing ourselves guilty as the word is here in the text, which is indeed acknowledging our offences, this is the way to prevent it, and if it be begun upon us, this is the ready way to remove it, for this is the end of it. When the Lord sees his children grieved for their offences and entreating pardon, he is a tender hearted father, the very father of mercies; those confessions and prayers that his children utter enter his paternal ears, the rod falls out of his hand, and he turns his stripes into embraces, and his frowns into smiling. There may be indeed, a confused cry from the sense of the smart

without repentance; that moves him not. As he directs parents in correcting a peevish child, *thou shall not spare for his crying*, so he himself doth not spare nor leave off, for that kind of crying; it is confession and submission that he seeks, not howling and complaining, which nature draws from any under sharp affliction. This the Lord complains of in his people by the same prophet, *They did not cry unto me with their hearts, they only howled upon their beds.* A man that is upon the rack for extorting confession, he will cry and roar when he confesses nothing, but it is not that which is sought of him, pain forces him to that, but it is confession, and when he begins the least word of that, they presently stay and release him. Thus it was with David, and he tells it us and distinguishes these two expressly, Psalm xxxi. 3. He tells us of his roaring under the hand of God, but that did no good: he found no ease by that, so long as he kept silence from this confession. But as soon as he began, did but offer at acknowledgement one word of confession, yea promise of it, brought him the release, that a whole day's roaring could not obtain. *I roared all day long but thou helped me not:* still thy hand continued heavy upon me. But I *acknowledged my sin, and I said I would confess my transgression, and thou forgavest the iniquity of my sin.*

Now to the end we may confess aright, there must be a searching of our hearts for our sins, and of some particular one or more which God's afflictions aim at, and if we cannot easily find it out; 1st. Consider the nature of the affliction. 2dly. Seek the knowledge of it from God, who will, readily, when he corrects his children, tell them what fault it is. 3dly. However finding so many, be sure to spare none of them, and then ye cannot but fall on the main one, which breedeth you trouble.

The other thing here concerning the end of affliction is, the efficacy of the means for reaching it.

In their affliction they will seek me early. It had been early, in a wiser sense, to have sought to him for a reconcilement before the affliction; but here it expresses a most diligent seeking, according to the original word, for things that men are earnest upon they will be early stirring to set about it. For besides that it is a certain prophecy of what was to come to pass, in this people, it hath in it this general truth, with which it agrees; to wit, the moral fitness of great affliction to work this diligent seeking of God, before neglected, and acknowledgment of sin before unfelt; which is exprest in the former clause, together with seeking his face; but with the sense and acknowledgment of sin. No returning to him, but from it. In following sin, we depart from God, and by forsaking it we return to him. These are inseparable; they are but one motion. It was their sin made him leave them and go to his place; and therefore it were in vain to seek him, retaining it, for that would drive him further from them.

Now affliction is apt to bring men to this; such I mean as have any knowledge of God. Although they convert not, yet it works them to a temporary fit of returning and seeking God, such as they are capable of; and those make up the greatest part in the public humblings of a nation, or any multitude of people; having most of them no more heat of devotion and desire of God, than the fit of present affliction works. And therefore when that ceases, they have done likeways with their repentance and regard of God; being stirred only by that outward principle. They act no longer that way, than they are acted by it. Water will be very hot, yea, boil and make a noise, when it is upon the fire; but set it off, and it returns, within a while, to its natural coldness. Thus it was often with the same people[h]. And there are still daily too many instances of it. Yet the Lord, to shew how much re-

[h] Psalm lxxviii.

gard he hath to repentance, lets not the very semblance of it go to loss; he is pleased, for the repressing of sin, and purging of his church of gross and scandalous prophaneness, to make use of public afflictions to work in many even this kind of repentance; and to answer, this repentance with the removal of the affliction that wrought it. With God's own children this method holds in a way peculiar to them. They may, indeed, as well as others, sometimes stand in need of the rod for their bettering; and it may work it. There is this difference: Their grief for sin and seeking after God, doth not wholly depend on the lash; they are constant in these things, as having a living principle within them: whence they shew, in all estates, that sin is to them the greatest grief, and the favor of God the greatest good. Again, when they are surprised with sin, and possibly fall into a fit of security, and must be awaked by some affliction, and it is sent for that purpose, that renewing it works in them is not, as in others, a mere present violent motion only, from the impulse of the affliction, but it is real and inward from the grace which is in them awake, and only set on work by the correction; and therefore is more abiding, than the other. There is in them a special love to God, working upon their repentings and returnings, upon the sense of his hand. And it is from God's special love to them (which others share not in,) that he stirs them up to renew repentance; and upon their repentance takes off affliction, and shews himself graciously reconciled to them. To some likewise it may be, that God may use some particular cross, as a partial and concurring means to the work of their repentance, and conversion to God. But however, there is in that some peculiar law of God, and that effectual working of his Word and Spirit to beget grace in them, by which afflictions are sanctified and made useful to excite and awaken grace where it is.

Now in all these different ways, affliction is apt

for this effect; 1st. Because it sets men in upon themselves, calls in their thoughts, that in a fair season more readily dissipate and scatter themselves abroad. As they observe, that much light disqualifies the sight of the mind, as well as body; and that in the dark, mens thoughts are more united and deep: thus in the darkness of affliction, we feel readily more inwards, and that acquaints us better with ourselves and our sins, and so tends to the first of these two, the acknowledging of our offences. Besides, the particular respect we speak of, is often betwixt the kind of affliction and our own sins. 2dly. When a man is driven by force from the comforts of the world, that he used to hinge upon especially by some great affliction which breaks him off from them all; then, if he have any thoughts concerning God, those begin to work with him. He bethinks himself for no other way of help, but, "could I obtain the Lord to befriend me, and shew me his favour, that were enough; he could deliver me out of this distress, and in the mean time support me under it. True, I have provoked him, and which is heavier than all my other troubles, I have made him mine enemy; yet I know he is very compassionate and gracious, therefore I will go to him, and confess my offence, and I trust he will pardon me." This is the other thing, the seeking of his face: so affliction hath something in it suitable to the work of both. As we see the lost son by his distress came to himself, then resolved to return to his father. Indeed, when a man is straitened on all hands, by a crowd of troubles, and finds no way out, then he finds his only way is upward. We know not what to do, but our eyes are towards Thee. The Israelites went before to other helpers. They are reproved for it, ver. 13, but once convinced of that folly, no more any such way; but as follows in the next words containing a description of their purposes, *Come let us return to the Lord our God*, acknowledging him the just inflicter of these calamities. *He* hath torn

and smitten—not a word of Salmanazer nor Nebuchadnezzar, but their offended God is their smiter. And so no recourse to other powers for this deliverance—*but let us return to him, he will heal us.* O then let us all be persuaded to repentance; and certainly all they who do truly mind the honor of God, and the good of his church, will not be negligent at such a time as this. I trust that God, who heareth prayer, will have regard to their prayers, and his own glory. Amen.

SUITABLE EXERCISE

IN

AFFLICTION.

SERMON II.

ISAIAH viii. and xvii.

And I will wait upon the Lord that hideth his face from the house of Jacob, and I will look for him.

BESIDES the personal trials and sorrows that are the lot of the godly in this life, every one of them hath a share in the calamities and troubles of the church; not only when some part of these troubles reaches them, for so they are personal and private, but in the remotest and most exempted condition. There is a living sympathy which this cannot divest, and for both their own and Zion's griefs, they have but one support to stay their souls from fainting under the burden of them. But it is a great one, and strong to bear all the weight that can be laid upon it. And it is this the prophet here resolves on, *I will wait upon the Lord*, &c.

Amongst the many sins that the prophets had to contend with in the people, one and a main one was, their unbelief, which indeed is the root of all disobedience and perverseness; the very natural motion of the heart possest with it, being as the apostle speaks, "to depart from the living God," and turn it aside to dead helpless helpers; makes it run to and confide in any thing rather than in him, besides whom, there is nothing at all to be confided in. To this folly the prophet here opposes God's command, and his own resolution contrary to it. And

the Lord spake thus to me, and this was the echo of his voice, resounding from my heart, *I will wait.* And this he speaks not only for himself, but in name of all that will adhere to it, and subscribe to his purpose; and intends it so as a leading resolution to the godly in his own and after times. And it is here upon record for us as the truest character of faith, and only establishment of the mind in the days of trouble.

And this is the most powerful way of teaching; when the messengers of God teach by their own example these duties they recommend to others. The Lord speaketh thus to him, ver. 11, "with a strong hand," (not only with the words of his mouth, but with the strength of his hand), makes the impression of it deep upon their hearts, that the expression of it may come from that inward impression and persuasion of the truth. And that will indeed bind a man strongly, (as the word signifies) to the discharge of that high calling, notwithstanding all his discouragements from within and from without, which are so many, that they that have most sense of the nature of it would possibly undo themselves, were it not the strong hand of God upon their consciences, that binds them to it.

In the words we have to consider, 1st. The trial of faith; 2dly. The strength of it. The trial of it is in the hiding of God's face from the house of Jacob. The strength of it, in that fixed purpose of waiting for him, even in that time of hiding his face.

Who hideth his face, &c.]. To a natural ear this soundeth not so much as fire, and sword, and pestilence, and captivity; but being rightly understood, it is the heaviest word, and very far weighs down all other expressions of distress whatsoever. It is a very large comprehensive word. All the good that we enjoy in any kind is but a beam of the face of God: and therefore the hiding of his face is a high

expression of a dark afflicted state. The countenance of God shining on them in his universal providence and goodness is that which upholds the world, and all the creatures in their being, the least of them subsists by him, and the greatest cannot subsist without him. So that the schools say truly, "There is in the lowest *aliquid dei*, and in the highest *aliquid nihili*." He shines upon all in that sense, preserving them in being which otherwise would not continue for a moment, as it is excellently expressed, Psalm civ. 29. And particularly concerning man, Psalm xc. 3.—Job xxxiv. 13, 14, 15.

But the church of God which we have here under the name of the house of Jacob, doth after an especial manner depend upon a special aspect of his countenance for her being and well-being. Her outward peace and prosperity, with all the blessings that she enjoys, are fruits of a more than ordinary providence. And there are blessings in their nature, not ordinary, but peculiar to the church; that have more of the face of God in them than all outward splendor of prosperity hath; and therefore are the special love-tokens he bestows upon his spouse the church; and testifies his marriage with her. And that is the being of a church, the oracles and ordinances wherein God manifests himself to his church, makes himself known there, as by his face which is hid from the rest of the world. And though, in comparison of the vision of glory, the clearest, even extraordinary manifestations of God, are but a glance of his back parts, (as that of Moses, which was singular). Yet in such a sense as suits our present condition, we are said to "Appear before the Lord, and stand in his presence, and to see his face, and the beauty of it in his house and ordinances[a]."

It is true that the outward distresses of the church

[a] Psalm xxvii. 4.

and people of God, are sometimes expressed by the hiding of his face from them. And so it is a part of what he means here, but it is not all the sense of it any where; but it is a word of their affliction carrying a reflection upon their sin, that provoked the Lord to afflict them, and so implies his just anger kindled by these provocations; and hath usually the ingredients of spiritual judgments under it, either the depriving of God's ordinances in their use, or of the power and efficacy of them, as at this time. We see the prophet's complaint, and possibly a great measure of that heavy judgment upon people, of blindness of mind and hardness of heart, a stupid senselessness under their calamities, that is one of the most certain and saddest signs of their continuance. And this is the prophet's meaning in this place, for without these or something like them, a church may be in great affliction, and yet not under the eclipse of God's face for all that. Yea, possibly it may shine clearer on the church in a time of outward trouble than in the midst of peaceable and prosperous days; as the moon when it is dark towards the earth, then the half that is towards heaven is all luminous, and on the contrary when it is the full to our view, it is dark heavenward. We see it in the common instance of the primitive times, how the gold shined in the furnace, how holiness and purity of religion flourished and spread in the midst of persecutions, and zeal for God burnt better than the fires that were kindled against it; and triumphed over them: and soon after they were put out, how it began to cool and abate, and the purity of religion insensibly died into numbers of superstitious and gaudy devices; and the church grew downwards; outwardly more pompous, but lost as much for that of integrity of doctrine and worship. And therefore in the 12th of Revelations, *There is a woman clothed with the sun, and the moon under her feet*, as full of heavenly ornaments as she is destitute, and withal despising those of the

earth. And look again, Rev. xviii. and see a woman clothed in purple and decked with gold and precious stones, and a golden cup in her hand, but herself, under all these dressings, a harlot, and her golden cup full of abominable filthiness. So then doubtless the hiding of God's face from his church is something beyond her outward lowness and affliction, and greater and heavier than that; the withdrawing of his presence and not appearing for their deliverance out of trouble and spiritual comfort and benefit under it.

1st. Now as that is put for the top of all distresses, we would esteem it so. But in reference to ourselves, and to the church of God, I am afraid a great part of us do not know what it is to have this light. If we did, there needed no more urging it. Itself would persuade us enough to prize it; and to fear the loss of it. The soul that knows the sweetness of his presence, and his face shining on it, will account no place nor condition hard, providing it may be refreshed with that; as the saints have been in caves and dungeons enjoying more of that light in those times, when other comforts have been abridged. Then they have had a beam from heaven into their souls in their darkest dungeon, far more worth than the light of the sun, and all the advantages the world can afford. That Rabbin that lived twelve years in a dungeon in Francis's time, called a book he wrote, the *Polar Splendor;* implying that he had then seen most intellectual light when he had seen least sensible. And thus it is with many Christians, in the darkness of distress, if they seek after this light, they may blame themselves and their own neglect if they find not somewhat of this truth. On the other hand, to a spiritual mind, this hiding of God's face will damp and distress the pleasantest outward condition which can be allotted him. It was in the midst of David's prosperity, enough to unseason all, *thou hidest thy face, and I was troubled.* Now, if we would have the Lord, to whom believing

souls are married in truth and righteousness, to look pleasantly on us, our great ambition should be to walk in all well pleasing unto him; and to seek of himself those ornaments and that spiritual beauty, that may make us lovely in his eyes; as a faithful wife decketh herself only for her husband. For all these inferior things are but figures of that mysterious life of grace, which the soul hath from God, and by which it lives in him. There are some singular largesses and outlets of spiritual joy that God gives not to every Christian; nor to any at all times. These we speak not of. But if we would enjoy more abiding influences of his love, and find him accepting of our services at our hands, and measuring his graces to us; coming to us and giving us access to come to him; putting a life and blessing into his ordinances, though with different degrees at divers times; and desire thus and in other little things his face to shine on us; then our care would be to entertain this friendship and correspondence diligently; to watch over our hearts and ways that we admit of nothing that may disturb or interrupt it; and to be jealous of the least abatement; to search and find out the cause of it without delay. And if we do thus, we shall undoubtedly find the Lord willing to converse and dwell with us, and though he give us lower measures of comfort and graces than others get; they shall be so much as will enable us to go on in our journey. Above all study humility. The High Lord loves to give himself and his society most to the lowly heart. Trust not at all to thyself, nor to any thing below him. Lay all thy confidence upon his power and goodness. Ye see here, that it was the multitude of sins that eclipsed his face from his own people, the house of Jacob; as he tells by this prophet, chap. lix. 1. It was particularly their distrust of God, and running to other helps beside him. Ever the more he is in thy esteem, the more thou shalt have of him; and the the more thou believest his all-sufficiency, the more

thou shalt find it and know it in thine own experience. Yea, it may be when his face is hid from the church, in respect of public distress and desertion; yet it may even then shine bright upon a soul that secretly cleaveth to him, and delights in him. So here, the prophet says not, that he hides his face from *me*, but from the *House of Jacob.*

2dly. As for the church, learn by the prophet and other penmen of the Holy Scriptures, to eye and consider the estate of God's church; to take notice how he deals with it, when he shines on it and when he hides his face; and be deeply affected with it. Let thine eye be out, and let thine eye affect thine heart, as it is Lament. iii. 51. Far be it from thee to judge it any impertinence, and think it concerns thee not, truly most of us have both eyes, and if we had twenty more, we would have them all poring upon our private condition. Providing we might have ease and good days, we would feel little for the *afflictions of Joseph.* It were not excusable if even our secret devotions took us so up as to forget the church; how much less to have our hearts ingrost wholly by our earthly concerns. And we see here what it is we have to do on the churches' behalf; to bewail her sins, begging pardon for those evils for which God hath hid his face from her; and what to desire, only to commence her own suit anew as troubles arise[b]; *Cause thy face to shine, and we shall be saved.* As the returning of the spring makes all things to flourish, and again puts a new visage upon nature. Mark the harmony and resound of the Lord's returning to Israel; the returning of their hopes[c]: and the sweet effects of it[d]. All those heavy indignations, that are on, or might trouble, the church and themselves, arise from security, impenitence, and the fruitlessness of the word amongst them; which makes the Lord hide his face from them. Our part is therefore to return to him. O

[b] Psalm lxxx. [c] Hosea xiv. 1—3. [d] Hosea xiv. 5, &c.

had we hearts to put the Lord to it, he could and would do yet greater things for us. And this we ought earnestly to desire, and with all patience to wait for it; which is the prophet's way, *I will wait.*

The two wheels of the soul are desire and hope. Difficulty sets an edge upon desire; and the appearance of obtaining upholds hope. And both these are in the words the prophet here uses for his waiting and expeding; for they import an earnest desire, and yet a patient attending upon the issue. Look to that of David[e], *I wait for thee more than they that wait for the morning;* that watch until the morning, as James renders it; in the cold night that watch. The thing the pilot waits for, is not a private good to himself, for that could not stand a counterbalance to the evil he is sensible of. The Lord's hiding his face from the house of Jacob was that which troubled him, and his waiting answerable for the return of that light to the house of Jacob. Grieved that the Lord should absent himself from his people, he looks back upon God's frequent appearing, and shewing his face to Jacob, by such visions as gave lustre and glory to the place. See Hosea xii. 9. *We found him in Bethel, there he spake with us.* Even us who have interest in these gracious appearances. And there it is urged for a ground of hope, and waiting and calling on God. Now, for the face of God to be hid from these that were the posterity of Jacob, and God's own peculiar people, was a sad thought to the prophet, who stays himself with this, that the Lord God had made known to him his purpose of returning and restoring the house of Jacob; and upon this he resolves to believe, and to rely upon God's word for it; *I will wait.*

Hoping, waiting, and believing are taken indifferently in the scriptures, and all the difference is only in relation to time. Faith believes the present word, and hope looks out for the after-accomplish-

[e] Psalm cxxx. [f] Hosea xii. 5, 6.

ment; and the patient waiting for it results from both. So they are but the actings of the same faith in a different notion—and they are indeed the task of faith. Our hearts are naturally of another temper, than to take the Lord's word and repose upon it, and when it is deferred, yea, and cross appearances come in betwixt, yet still firmly to believe and patiently to wait for the accomplishment. We are of a childish humour. That which we laugh at in children, in little things, such as their minds are set on, we may be sorry for in ourselves, as a greater folly being in greater affairs. We are all on haste, and would have things come as fast as our fancying; and upon the delay of these mercies we look for, are almost ready to give over. That which brake forth from that wicked king's mouth, the seed of it is in all our hearts, when things appear worse and worse, *this evil is from the Lord, why should I wait for him any longer?* it is strange in court suits and other business of a like nature, how long a man will wait upon another, and think all is well if he speed at last; and yet how briskly we deal with God if he answers not at the first.

But faith teaches us (so to speak) spiritual civility, good manners towards God; lets the soul see his greatness, and goodness, and truth; and persuades us to wait on him: and not to weary in waiting. To wait as it is Psalm xl.—1st. Faith composes the mind, cures that light fickle hastiness, that is naturally in us. *He that believeth shall not make haste,* says the same prophet. And is it not good reason we wait for him? Is he not wise enough to chuse the fittest times for his own purposes? well may we wait till he be gracious to us, for he waits to be gracious to us[s]. He is not slack; but is staying only for the due season; his love waiting for the time that his wisdom hath appointed. And to express his affection in our terms, he is longing for that

[s] Isaiah xxx. 18.

time, as well as we are. For the same word is there used for his waiting, that both here and in that verse, is used for *ours;* and it signifies an earnest waiting or breathing for that thing we wait for. And therefore since he waits and longs, our waiting is in an happy conformity to him; and thus, with good reason, it is concluded, they are blessed that wait for him. Thus there is a word very answerable [h]. *The vision is for an appointed time,* (we read) *at the end it shall speak;* but it may be rendered, *it breatheth towards the end;* runs, as it were, so fast that it panteth; the same word is used, Cant. ii. for the rising of the morning.

3dly. By fretting impatience there is nothing gained but needless desire. It advances not our business, but perplexes us to no purpose; and on the other hand, patient waiting loses not a moment, but attains its end in the very due time determined; and hath this advantage in the mean time, that it puts the mind to a temper of peace and contentedness, that a man may act and profess to others, but cannot truly have within himself without faith [i]. This waiting is always answered; never markt with disappointment, as is the ordinary custom of their hopes. Therefore that which the prophet hath, "believers shall not make haste," the Apostle Peter renders, "shall not be ashamed," though he hasten not, but wait and wait long, yet his waiting shall not shame him; none shall have matter to laugh at him for it; for his waiting shall be repaid with success, his hope shall be accomplished; whereas, any other expectations make men ridiculous, and expose them to scorn, in that they look often for most contentment in these things that deceive them. Thus Job vi. 19. The brooks that grow dry in summer are an emblem of worldly hopes. The troops of Tema looked, the companies of Sheba

[h] Hab. ii. 3. [i] Isaiah xxvi. 3, 4.

waited for them. They were confounded, because they had hoped; they came thither and were ashamed, but this waiting on the Lord never yet deluded any. *I waited patiently for the Lord*[k], *and he inclined to me and heard my cry.* Then he makes his experience a common good; draws it to a general conclusion[l], *Blessed is the man that maketh the Lord his trust*; thus he confirms that general truth by his particular experience, and as the Apostle says of them believing, sets too his seal that God is true. Thus ought every one, upon his experience of the Lord's goodness in his deliverance, speak to the advantage of the Lord's faithfulness, and say, as he is called abundant in goodness and truth, "I have found him and I would have others to rely upon him; if my testimony could do any good to that, or persuade them, they shall be sure to have it wheresoever I come;" thus Psalm xxxiv. The prophet will not smother the Lord's goodness which he hath found "this poor man cried;" &c. and Verse 8. he invites all to taste and see the Lord is good, blessed are they who trust in him. He will advise others to this upon his own experience. Sure he will know where to seek, when he is again put to it. As he loves the Lord for what he hath found, so he will make use of him always in all his straits[m], *I love the Lord*, &c. seeing "he hath inclined his ear to me," I am resolved upon this course, "I will call upon him as long as I live."

The difficulties which the Prophet's faith here encounters, and that commended the strength of it are these two, 1st. The multitude of unbelievers round about, as a mighty torrent, that he was to come against. 2dly. That so few would rely on the Lord. But he resolves against it, as Joshua did for obedience, *chuse you whom you will serve*, &c. So here, for faith, let others take their course; each one run his own way, my choice is this, *I will wait on*

[k] Psalm xl. [l] Ver. 4. [m] Psalm cxvi. 2.

the Lord, and this is no small matter to maintain the preciousness of faith against the profaneness and atheism of the world. And considering the disregard of God that is in the society and converse of the greatest part, it is much if a godly mind do not sometimes suffer something by it; and we have need to beware of it.

2dly. The other difficulty is in the thing itself, that looks so dark and unlikely, that many of his people are giving over trusting on him, and he seems to give over helping them, he hides his face. *Yet I will wait on him alone,* (says the prophet) though all other hearts fail, yet I will wait on thee, though thou withdraw thyself and hide thy face, yet I will look to no other; I will stay by thee and wait on thee, and although not only my days may pass, but ages, before the thing be accomplished I look for, yet I will believe they shall come to pass. I will look on them in this notion; though I cannot live to see them. And indeed besides that the great temporal deliverances that the prophet foresaw and here looks into, came long after his days, it is likely that he looks beyond these too, to the coming of the Messiah, of whom he speaks so clearly both in this and the former and following chapter. Notwithstanding all the sins of this people, and all the heavy judgments their sins called for; and have brought or shall bring on them, yet he believed the Lord would send them that great deliverer and Saviour his only Son, whom he had promised. Thus the eyes of faith looks over the head of many difficulties and of many ages betwixt it to the thing it expects, and sees it beyond them all. So the word here, I will look for him, is to stand upright as a line and look out, answering to that word, Ἀποκαραδοκια, Rom. viii. desiring and confidently expecting good from him to his church in these kingdoms, though the outward face of affairs look quite contrary; and the Lord for a time suffer our troubles to encrease, and hide his face as

not regarding us, suffering things by the perverseness of men on all hands to turn to an universal confusion and disorder; yet still, you that know the Lord and his dealing, pray, and believe, and wait and be assured your prayer shall be answered in due time.

Thus far your personal condition; you that desire the light of God's countenance above all things, though he seem to deny and hide his face from you for a time; yet wait on him, leave him not, for if ye do, you are sure to perish; but if ye wait on him ye may say, it may be he will be gracious, but if he will not, I know no other to go to; I will still wait and try him. What think ye of Job's purpose? *Though he slay me yet I will trust in him,* though I saw him ready to throw me into hell, yet I will look for mercy. Faith cannot be nonplust, there is in it a pious obstinacy that will not yield to the greatest opposition; nor give over so long as there is any possibility of prevailing. *I said* (says Jonah) *I am cast out from thy presence,* yet for all that I cannot give the matter up for desperate; I must have leave to *look* towards thee, *Yet I will look towards thy holy temple.* Invincible faith, as here, *I will wait—I will look,* doubles the word, and is meant to express his resolvedness in the beginning of the verse, and in the end of it; and so conquers the difficulty that makes against it. And this is the purest acting of faith, when there is nothing of sense to support it; and yet it holds out, and as Abraham did, against hope believes in hope. When the soul is at the hardest pinch, faith will say I shall be at the footstool of the throne of grace until I be thrown from it; I will not away from it, I will wait on till the last moment. *Amen.*

OF THE

FOUR CAUSES

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THERE are four causes, *viz.* the Efficient, the Matter, the Form, and the End. The efficient and the end are extrinsical, the matter and form are intrinsical to the being.—The efficient cause is that which extrinsically operates, and concurs in the giving being and existence to things: and it is either supreme, or subordinate. The supreme cause and author of all things is God, the great Creator of all things; who gives a being by his creative power, and subsistence and preservation in their being and existence by his supporting providence.

God is an efficient cause two ways, 1st. by way of creation, in making all things from nothing, by the word of his power. 2d. By way of production, when out of the pre-existent matter, which he hath created, he formeth other creatures: God, from nothing, did create that prime matter and confused mass which was without form and void*. Then next, out of that unformed mass and chaos, did he form the visible heavens; the elements, the waters, and the dry land. And out of these elements again, did he form and produce fishes, fowls, creeping things, herbs, plants, trees, fruit, grass, &c.

2d. The efficient cause of things is two-fold, *viz.* supreme and subordinate: the supreme is God himself, as hath been said; the subordinate causes are all other things which God maketh use of, as his tools and instruments subservient to him in his

* Genesis i.

operations and productions. Not that he standeth in need of those now, more than he did in the first creation of all things; but that it is suitable to his greatness to have subservient agents ministering unto him; and answerable unto his goodness so far to put respect upon the works of his own hands, as to make them his instruments and workers together with himself. It is becoming his wisdom too, (that doth nothing in vain) to employ his creatures in such acts and operations, and for such ends as he hath fitted and qualified them for.

3d. Efficient causes which are subordinate to God, are either moral or natural. The former are conducted by reason, the latter by the instinct of nature; those act by choice, these by necessity.

Amongst those natural causes or agents, (as they are distinguished from rational and voluntary) there are some sensitive, such as brutes; some vegetative, such as plants; some merely natural and void of life and sense, such as the elements, minerals, metals, &c.

4th. God the supreme cause in using the ministry of subordinate causes, acts by each of them respectively in a way suitable to their separate natures and capacities, with which he hath indued them: he moveth rational and moral agents by the rules and methods of reason, sensitive agents by the conduct of sense, mere natural and inanimate agents by invisible power.

5th. Such is the power and sovereignty of God, the supreme cause over all creatures and inferior agents, and such is their dependence upon him, and subordination to him, that God can do all things without them, but they can do nothing without him.

6th. Such is the wisdom and divine disposition of the supreme cause, that he fits his creatures with such natures and qualities, properties and propensities, as renders them apt and suitable agents for the operations and effects he designs them for, and then

employs them; the fire is hot, and therefore proper to warm, but not to cool us—the water is cold, and therefore proper to cool and cleanse us, but not to warm us.

7th. God Almighty, to shew his freedom in acting, and independence upon secondary agents, doth sometimes act immediately without the intervention of secondary means, sometimes with them, sometimes above them, sometimes contrary unto them, lest the production of effects should be attributed to the mean, and not to the supreme author. For although the Lord doth not ordinarily alter the course of nature, which he hath appointed, nor change the methods which he hath laid down, nor dissolves the usual connection and coherence of secondary causes, nor stops the natural powers, faculties, and operations, with which he hath endued his creatures; yet sometimes the Lord doth all these things extraordinarily, to cure men of that extraordinary error and stoicism of thinking, that all things come by a blind fate, or by the sole efficiency of natural causes, and thus rob the supreme cause of the glory which is due to his name.

8th. Such is the sovereignty of the supreme cause above inferior agents, that he so rules and overrules their natural propensities, and their deliberations and voluntary elections and actings, that whatever be their purposes and projects, yet the Lord doth so conduct and sway them, that they shall finally accomplish that which himself designs, though they intend not any such thing, yea may intend the quite contrary.

9th. The various means and methods which God Almighty is pleased to make use of in doing his works, and bringing to pass his purposes, is a matter worthy our consideration. Amongst these some are natural causes, which act of necessity and uniformly; others are rational causes which act by deliberation, choice, and free will; there is a third which we call contingent causes, that produce ef-

fects accidentally, and besides the design or intent of the instrumental agent.

10th. As for natural causes, which act of necessity, uniformly observable is divine providence acting by them, as if reason did act in them. God giveth food to man and beast, and to provide them with it is his work. This work he bringeth to pass by the concourse of natural causes, the heavens, the earth, the times and seasons, the dews and rains, all concur to this purpose, each of these act their parts regularly, as if they were influenced by reason, and had rational intelligence in themselves. None of these know what they do, nor to what end they operate; yet wise providence rules them all, and effectuates his purposes in conducting their courses to that end.

11th. Very mysterious are the actings of Divine Providence about man, who is a rational free agent, and conducted in his actings by reason, deliberation, election, and free will; how God should bring first set purposes to pass, by agents left so much to their own free-will, seems strange, and it wants not difficulty to conceive, how upon the one part, God's counsel, purposes, and determinations, shall infallibly come to pass; (for all that he hath determined must come to pass) and yet the bringing of those things to pass be left to the freedom of man's will, and choice, and deliberation, which are things so uncertain, and so improbable to effectuate the work committed to them or expected by them, that rather the contrary is to be feared, considering how usual it is for man's will and purposes to cross God; and man's wisdom is but as foolishness before God. To say, that man hath not the use of free will in his deliberations, electings, and actings must infer such gross absurdities, as both the divine and the human nature would be greatly disparaged: for to affirm, that God gives man a rational soul, and yet deprives him of the use of his reason, gives him a free-will, and yet deprives him of the

use of this freedom in deliberating and electing, what reason demonstrates to be good and expedient, this were to disparage the goodness, wisdom, and bounty of God. And if he should give man a free will, and yet *not* give it, by keeping it under such bonds and fetters as take away all freedom from it; give him a rational soul, and yet never suffer him to make use of his reason; give him a power of chusing, and yet never power to choose, how absurd the idea!

Human nature is hereby greatly degraded, and brought down to the rank of brutes; as that which makes the difference between them is quite destroyed; for, if man have not the freedom of his will, wherein differs he from mere natural agents, that act by necessity.

And, if he have not the freedom of choice and reason, wherein differ his actings from those of a brute? Yea he is thrust down *below* them; for, they act by those principles which the God of nature hath given them; and man only is deprived of the use of his faculties; viz. reason, election, and deliberation; all being constrained to act by an overruling providence, according to their own nature.

Moreover, if men do not act rationally by the conduct of reason, nor by election and free choice, but of constraint and necessity, their actions could neither be reckoned virtuous nor vicious; nor be connected either with reward or punishment; which is such an absurdity as no rational man will assent to.

For clearing of these difficulties, three things are to be illustrated; 1st. That man hath not only the power and faculty of free-will, but also the exercise of it in his moral actions; so that notwithstanding of the freedom man hath to chuse, deliberate, and discourse, 2d. Yet these faculties of the soul, and the exercise of them, are so far under the government and power of the supreme cause, that notwithstanding of their liberty, God doth by them bring his

purposes to pass. 3dly. That hereby the nature and due liberty of the will are not infringed.

1st. As to the first of these we say, that man is a rational creature and a moral agent, and therefore must act rationally, voluntarily, and by choice: and not like a brute or mere natural agent, which acts by fancy, sense, or mere natural propensity, and of necessity. That man may act rationally and voluntarily, it is necessary he have not only the powers and faculties in exercise, for the powers themselves while they remain sealed up in the habit are useless and ineffectual.

In the soul of man there are two prime and principal faculties; viz. the understanding, and the will. The understanding exercises itself in two things; it hath a discursive operation and a judicative; when the understanding exercises itself in the search of matters, and canvasseth and argueth what things are true and good, or best to be done; this is called discourse or reasoning; next the understanding cognosces and considers of those things which reason by search and labour hath found out, and gives verdict which amongst those things is best and fittest, and this is called judgment: and amongst men some excel in the rational or discursive faculty, others again do more excel in the judicative faculty, and have more of a solid judgment than others who outstrip them in a flourishing discourse; and the reason hereof is, that the judgment is slower than the fancy; doth move deliberately; keeps greater correspondence with the understanding than it doth with the fancy, it weigheth not words but matters, it considereth the nature, quality, evidence, and expedience of things before it give its verdict of them; the rational and discursive faculty being busied about the theory of things, and discoursing what is to be said, solicits the assistance of the fancy; the practical judgment is concerned about what is to be done, and therefore must consider not only the reasonableness of words, but also the practicable-

ness of the matter, which it is about to do; it must consider not only what the sound can say *pro tempore*, but what will be the sequel of the action it is about *pro futuro*.

After reason and discourse have ranged, searched, found out, and debated matters, and proposed to the judgment what and which of these are to be approved; and when, after mature deliberation, the judgment hath compared, weighed, and considered both matters and circumstances, it gives out its verdict of these matters brought before its bar, judging what is good and lawful, and what not; what things are necessary and expedient, what not; what things are more or less proper, what things are indifferent. After all this process, then the second faculty of the soul, the will, cometh upon the stage, and the office of it is to make choice of some of those things which reason hath discovered, and judgment hath determined to be good and expedient.

The will though it hath not so much of judgment and discretion as the understanding, yet it hath more of empire and sovereignty; it sits as the prince and controller of our actions, and is not under fear nor constraint to follow the dictates of the judgment, for though the understanding propose that which is good and expedient, yet it remains in the option of the will to chuse or not to chuse; and when the understanding proposes two things indifferent equally good, then it is in the will to chuse what it pleaseth; yea, when the understanding proposes a greater and a less good, the will many times prefers the lesser good before the greater; and to shew its power and empire, will sometimes chuse that which is less expedient, before that which is more expedient; this the will doth by virtue of its native freedom and liberty, and this freedom it must have, otherways our actions were not voluntary, neither were man a moral or free agent, and if so there were

no virtue in his actions, and consequently they would be worthy neither of praise nor blame.

The will is called the rational appetite, to distinguish it from such appetites and desires as are merely natural or sensitive; and it is said to be rational because it is capable of reason, when held forth and ministered unto it by the rational faculty, viz. the intellect or understanding, otherways it acts even as other natural faculties do, in desires or aversions, according as its object proposed, is good or bad.

As truth is the object of the understanding, so goodness is the object of the will, and whatever the will chuses, it always chuses as a thing good either really or apparently, the will in its choice followeth not always the dictates of the understanding.

There is nothing more ordinary than for the will to prefer the lesser good to the greater, and apparent good before that which is so; the reason of this obliquity springs especially from these fountains; 1st. From the ignorance and error that is in the understanding, or some corrupt ill principles which are rooted in the mind, by reason whereof it is not able clearly to propose things to the election of the will. 2dly. From this, that the will keepeth more correspondence with the senses and fancy, than with the understanding and judgment, and is more influenced by them, whence it comes to pass, that in its choice it gratifies sense rather than reason. 3dly. This sometimes flows from the pride and stubbornness of the will itself, so that it will act according to its own option and pleasure, yet whatever be the advantage which the intellectual faculty hath above the will or appetite, the will hath this pre-eminence above it, that the goodness and morality of our actions depend more upon the good affections of the will, than upon the abilities and apprehensions of the understanding.

The second thing to be cleared in this par-

ticular is, that notwithstanding of the liberty that is in man's will, and of the mutabilities, contingencies, and inconstancies, which attend his actions, and many disappointments which accompany them, yet God's determined purposes and counsel shall infallibly be brought to pass.

This shall be made sufficiently appear by shewing that it is so, and secondly why of necessity it must be so; first that it is, is most evident from the sacred oracles of divine truth, Psalm xxxiii. 11. The counsel of the Lord standeth for ever, and the thoughts of his heart to all generations, Prov. xix. 21. There are many devices in a man's heart, yet the counsel of the Lord shall stand, Isaiah xlvi. 10. "My counsel shall stand, and I will do all my pleasure." Those and many such other scriptures clearly shew that it is.

Next it is to be made appear why it must be so, and hereof valid reasons may be given.

We are therefore to consider that God Almighty hath absolute power and dominion over the works of his hands; all creatures and secondary causes depend upon God the Creator, and supreme cause both as to the being and operations which holdeth good not only of natural but also of moral agents, for in him we live, and move, and have our being[b].

The relation which is betwixt the Creator and the creatures, the supreme cause and subordinate causes, doth of necessity infer this dependence and subservience, for to be a creature and yet not to depend upon the Creator infers a contradiction, every thing besides God is a creature, and if it were without dependence upon him, then were it no creature: but there is no independent being but that Eternal Being who only is of himself, and of whom are all things.

The like dependence have all secondary and subordinate causes in their operations upon that supreme

[b] Acts xvii. 28.

cause, for he that upholds them in their being, by consequence upholds them in their operations, which depend upon their being.

That the operation of secondary causes, depends not absolutely and simply upon the very being and existence of the things themselves, but that a divine concourse is further required to cause them to put forth their virtues and operations, is very apparent from that instance of the sun's standing still in the days of Joshua, and the fire of the Babylonish furnace not consuming the three children; the sun persisted in his being and brightness, but stops in his motion, because the great Mover of all things did not concur; the fiery furnace continues burning, but is not able to singe either the hair or cloaths of the three children, even when it consumed others; this fell out because God suspended his concourse with the fire in reference to these three; and such like with Daniel in the lion's den; the Lord did provide a raven to feed Elias, and a whale to swallow Jonah when he was cast into the sea; the Lord sent out two she-bears out of the wood, which devoured forty and two of the children of Bethel, for mocking the prophet Elisha[c].

By these instances given, both of animate and inanimate things, it very clearly appears, that God the supreme cause hath not only power, but also exercises his power over subservient instruments and agents, that at his pleasure he can sway and rule the appetites and actions of brutal creatures, by exciting and restraining them to do what he pleaseth; he restrains the hungry lions and excites the bears, and not only so, but also he ruleth mere natural and inanimate things, such as the heavens and earth, the sun, moon, and stars, the waters, the air, the clouds, and stormy tempests, they obey him and execute his will, of those the Psalmist says, "all are thy servants[d]. These effectuate such works as God is

[c] 2 Kings ii. 12. [d] Psalm cxix. 91.

pleased to employ them in, and this they do by being upheld by him in their being, by having his concourse with their operations, and being applied by him to operate upon such matters, and produce such effects as he desires.

That which lies more directly in our road, and cometh closer to our present enquiry is, to consider God's power and sovereignty over moral agents who act voluntarily and freely; for to exercise sway and dominion over the will, would seem to destroy the very nature and freedom of the will, so that man should be no more a free agent; and to say that God the supreme cause doth not exercise dominion and rule over moral agents, would infer a great number of insufferable absurdities.

We lay it down as an infallible truth and sure conclusion, that God Almighty exerciseth dominion, not only over brutal and inanimate agents and instruments, but also over moral agents, who act voluntarily and by free choice.

All creatures and agents, whether moral or natural, depend upon God; both as to their being and operations. But to restrict the exercise of God's jurisdiction to brutal or natural agents only, were to limit his rule and government, and put limits to that which is infinite, which is absurd; therefore he rules one as well as the other.

To say that God should only take care to govern the meaner and inferior sort of natural agents, and leave the more noble instruments of his honor; viz. men, who are rational agents, to shift for themselves, and act as they list, and deprive them of the great happinesss of his conduct and government, were inconsistent with the honor, wisdom, and goodness of God.

3dly. The most cruel barbarities which the corrupt nature of fallen man would infallibly prompt them to exercise one upon another, would make the world a field of blood, a theatre of horrid spectacles; if men were left to themselves, and were not re-

strained by an over-ruling providence, to permit the world into run into such horrid confusion, as would make the societies of men the most miserable of all creatures, yea a thousand fold worse than that of brutes. This were inconsistent with the infinite goodness and mercy of Almighty God, who preserveth man and beast. It were most absurd to say that God should replenish the earth and the waters with such variety of things comfortable for the life of man, and then suffer all these things to be useless, by subtracting his hand from protecting, ruling and governing them, without which they could enjoy neither comfort, peace, tranquillity, nor any thing that is good: therefore, of necessity, the government of men, the ruling of their wills, the ordering and disposing of their actions must be the great Ruler of heaven and of earth.

It is necessary God should exercise such a rule and government over man, as without which neither justice nor equity can be preserved, or God's designs and purposes brought to pass. But unless God rule over the hearts, wills, consultations and actions of men, neither can justice nor equity be preserved; nor would God's purposes or intentions be brought to pass, and this may easily appear to be true, if men were absolute in their own disposal, considering the wickedness and averseness of the will of man from the will of God, and every thing that is good.

But, finally, to come nearer the point, not only hath God right to rule and govern all creatures, and all their actions by right of creation, and by virtue of their dependence on him; and not only doth the necessity of the preservation of the world and human societies, the execution of justice and equity, the accomplishment of God's commands, and the effectuating of his holy purposes, require his actual ruling and immediate conduct and sway over all voluntary moral agents; but it can be

evinced and demonstrated from scripture that he really and actually doth it.

God Almighty hath dominion and rule over all creatures, and their actions; over the hearts and wills of men, as well high as low, as well good as bad, as well over their public consultations, as their private deliberations. If any men might pretend or seem to have absolute freedom, and free exercise of their own wills and actions, then princes of all men might most pretend to it, whose power and authority set them above the check or controul of men; but even over *their* hearts, and wills, and minds, doth the Lord rule; this is very clear from the words of Solomon [m], "The king's heart is in the hands of the Lord; as the rivers of water he turneth it, whithersoever he will;" this holds true in reference to good kings; hence the king and prophet David [n], *Incline my heart to thy testimonies, not unto covetousness, &c.* If God had not the ruling of the heart, and inclining of the will in his power, to what purpose were his prayers? He hath also the power of the hearts of the most wicked and stubborn of kings; God had power over Pharaoh's heart to harden and subdue it when he pleased, that he should not let the people go [o]. When the Lord pleased, he bowed and constrained Pharaoh to let them go, and he sent to Moses and Aaron, and said, "Rise up, get you forth from among my people [p].

The Lord for a just punishment of the sins and rebellions of his people, owns it that he stirred up these adversaries against them, and inclined their hearts to hate and afflict them [q]: "He turned their hearts to hate his people," &c. [r] For lo! *I raise up the Chaldeans, that bitter and hasty nation, which shall pass through the breadth of the land to possess it.* God hath such rule and sway over the wills

[m] Prov. xxi. 11. [n] Psm. cxix. 36. [o] Exod. iv. 21.
[p] Exod. xxii. and xxxi. [q] Psm. cv. 25. [r] Hab. i. 6.

and inclinations of men, that when he pleaseth to punish his people by any nation, he has no more ado, but give them the least sign of his will, and therefore he sayeth, that he will *hiss for the fly that is in the uttermost part of the river of Egypt, and for the bee that is in the land of Assyria*[r]. God ruleth not only the private deliberations of particular men, but also the public consultations and transactions of kings and states[s]; "God standeth in the congregation of the mighty, he judgeth amongst the Gods." And because the great king, Nebuchadnezzar, would not know nor acknowledge this, therefore Daniel plainly told him, that he "should be driven from among men, and his dwelling should be with the beasts, till he knew that the Most High ruleth in the kingdoms of men, and giveth it to whomsoever he will[t]."

God doth so determine and over-rule the actions of men, that he makes them subservient to execute his righteous judgments, and bring his holy purposes to pass; while they are intending no such thing. For the sins of Jerusalem the Lord resolved to punish them, and execute his righteous judgments upon them; and to this purpose employed the king of Assyria against them: but the proud man had no such design, but only to gratify his own pride, and therefore the Lord says of him, *that he meant not so, neither did his heart think so, but it was in his heart to destroy and cut off nations not a few*[v]. God did so rule the consultations and actings of the Scribes, and Pharisees, and High Priests in putting Christ to death, that what they did was what his hand and counsel had determined before to be done[w]; but their designs and motives were quite another way.

The third thing which remains to be spoke unto, according to our method, is to shew, that notwithstanding God's predetermining and swaying the wills and actions of man, according to his good

[r] Isaiah vi. 18. [s] Psalm lxxxi. 1. [t] Dan. iv. 2.
[v] Isa. x. 7. [w] Acts iv. 28.

pleasure, yet the liberty that is proper to the will of man is not hereby violated, nor the will forced; which will lead us also to consider a little the nature and freedom of the will.

We are first to consider, that God, by his holy and wise counsel hath constituted this universe, appointing the order of nature, and the course of natural causes; that he upholds them in their being, and affords them his divine concourse according to their respective natures and virtues; and this established order he doth not alter, unless upon some extraordinary emergencies, when his own glory and his people's good require it to be so: and then it is done by miracle. Thus, the Lord made the sun to stand still in the days of Joshua, and go back ten degrees in the days of Hezekiah. He made the red sea to go back, and the river of Jordan to stop its course. He bound up the burning violence of the fiery furnace, and restrained the ravenous appetite of the hungry lions.

The omnipotent and all-ruling power and providence of God must not be limited, or restrained to the governing of mere natural and necessary agents; but doth equally extend itself over moral and voluntary agents; the power, liberty, and acting of created, limited, and subordinate wills, are no less under the predeterminating sway and rule of the absolute and supreme will of God, (*who doth all things according to the counsel of his own will*) than any other agents are at the disposal of his power, will, and pleasure.

God created man a reasonable creature: this reasonable soul of his is indued with suitable faculties, such as understanding, will, memory, &c. Man by his fall lost the gift of original righteousness, (which in some sense may be called supernatural) yet did he not lose the natural powers and faculties of the soul, for then he would cease to be man; and although the powers and faculties of the soul be much disordered and debilitated, yet the use and

exercise of them is not quite gone; at least in things which are naturally rational and merely moral, and not altogether supernatural and divine; *these things the natural man perceiveth not, neither indeed can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned.*

Man being in his first creation indued with a freedom and liberty of his will, as well as with a power of reason; therefore we say, as man by his fall lost not the power and faculty, nor the use of it altogether, for then he should cease to be a man: so proportionally we must say that he hath not lost the natural faculty of free-will, nor the exercise of it; for if so, then should he cease to be a moral free agent; and the will being, of all the faculties of the soul, privileged with the greatest liberty, reason would say, that amongst all the faculties the will would seem to be that which should receive the least detriment; though detriment it hath received, as well as the rest.

But seeing man is a creature, he must needs be dependant upon the Creator; his will, and the freedom of it, is not of itself, nor absolute, but dependant upon the will of God; it must therefore be bounded and limited by the will of God; for his will sets limits to the will of man.

For the better understanding the will of man, it is very expedient that we consider God's will.

God is every way infinite, and that which is infinite cannot be comprehended by finite capacities; those things which God hath revealed concerning himself, are but little of what he is; and of that little, but a little apprehended by our dark understandings, for we see but darkly as through a glass[x]. This holds true of a spiritual man, for of such speaketh the apostle: but of a natural man it is said, that he neither doth nor can perceive the things of the Spirit. The heathens, by their natural wisdom,

[x] Cor. xiii. 21.

knew not God[e]. And when they leaned to their own wisdom in finding out the knowledge of God, they became vain in their imaginations, and their foolish hearts were darkened. [f] *Lo, these are parts of his ways; but how little a portion is heard of him. Canst thou by searching find out God? canst thou find out the Almighty to perfection*[g]?

For the better and clearer uptaking of the will of God, and resolution of several difficulties, divines make use of several distinctions of the will of God. 1. They distinguish betwixt his secret and revealed will. 2. Betwixt the sign of his will, and the good pleasure of his will, which they term, voluntas signi et voluntas beneplaciti. 3. Betwixt his will of purpose, and will of precept. 4. Betwixt his effective will, and his permissive will. 5. Betwixt his antecedent and consequent will. 6. Betwixt his will of permission, and his will of approbation.

We must not imagine that these distinctions do infer that there are various wills in God; for whatever opposition there is, or seems to be, amongst these different distinguishing terms, yet the will of God is always consonant to itself, and one. But because the will of God, which is one, hath many objects and different operations, these minister occasion for those several distinctions.

These distinctions partly take their rise from scripture. Sure it is, that God willeth many things, which to us are unknown, and this we call his secret will: many things which God willeth are made known to us, this we call his revealed will. Scripture giveth ground for this distinction[h]: "The secret things belong to the Lord; but those things which are revealed, belong to us, and our children."

Touching the secret and revealed will, as this doth not import two wills in God, so neither must we imagine that there is any opposition betwixt God's

[e] Cor. i. 4. [f] Rom. xii. Job. xxvi. 19.
[g] Job. vii. 7. [h] Deut. xxix 29.

secret will and his revealed; as if God spake one thing to us by his revealed will, and intended another thing, contrary thereunto, by his secret will; for this were such a solecism in morality, so contrary to that veracity and ingenuousness which God requireth in his very creatures, a thing which the Eternal Truth can never be guilty of in the least. But, that which is God's revealed will was, before revelation, a part of his secret will; and as he willed it before it was revealed, so also after, and his secret will is of other things not yet made known, and comes to be known one of two ways, either by revelation or event.

The next thing we are to observe herein, is, that God's revealed will, and not his secret will, is the rule of our obedience; so that though we do contrary to God's secret will, yet he is pleased with our obedience given to his revealed will; for though a child pray for the preservation of his parents' life, whom God in his secret will purposes to take away by death; yet God approves of the piety and charity of the child. So upon the other hand, although persons do according to the secret purpose and will of God, yet if in this they be acting contrary to his revealed will and commands, they act impiously before God. What Pilate and the Jews did in condemning and crucifying Christ, was nothing else but what the hand and counsel of God had determined to be, as the Apostle saith, Acts iv. 28. He was delivered by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God; notwithstanding they crucified him with *wicked hands*. The Jews delivered him up out of envy; and Pilate condemned him, though he found no fault in him. This was an abomination to the Lord.

The next distinction of the divine will is into *effective and permissive*. Things which fall out in the world, are either good or bad. Most certain it is, that there is nothing good but that whereof God is the Author; from him, the father of lights, cometh

down every good and perfect gift[i]. It is sure upon the other part, that God is not the author, nor can be the cause, of evil, (viz. the evil of sin) for God cannot be tempted with evil, neither tempteth he any man: but every man is tempted when he is drawn away of his own lust, and enticed[k]. It is also certain, that nothing can fall out against the will of God, when he is pleased to oppose it,—this were to say that Omnipotence could be overcome, which were absurd. We must say then, that these things fall out by the permission of God, or by his permissive will. Scripture speaks of both God's effectual will, and efficacious power and working; Ezek. xxxvi. 37. *I will put my Spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes, and ye shall keep my judgments, and do them*[l]. *For he that wrought effectually to the apostleship of the circumsicion, the same was mighty in me towards the Gentiles*[m]. *Whereof I was made a minister, according to the gift of the grace of God given unto me by the effectual working of his power*[n]. *For it is God that worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure*[o]. *The word of God which effectually worketh in you that believe.* From these and such-like scriptures, it is evident that God so willeth some things, that he worketh powerfully and effectually, as to their production.

Touching the permissive will of God, in suffering and permitting other things to come to pass, wherein he operates not after that manner and method as about those things which are good and acceptable in his sight; it is also clear from the phrases of scripture, which use a different style, importing that God suffers these things so to be; and this either by leaving them to themselves, or giving them over to be led by Satan[p]. *Who in times past suffered all*

[i] James i. 17. [k] James i. 13, 14. [l] Gal. ii. 8.
[m] Eph. iii. 7. [n] Phil. xxiii.
[o] Thess. ii. 13. [p] Acts xiv. 16.

nations to walk in their own ways, &c[q]. "But my people would not hearken unto my voice, and Israel would none of me[r]." "So I gave them up to their own hearts, and they walked in counsels of their own;" it is said that God "gave up the Gentiles to uncleanness, through the lusts of their own hearts, and to vile affections[s]. He giveth them also up to Satan, that spirit who worketh in the children of disobedience[t].

Touching those evils which God in holy and righteous judgment suffers and permits to fall out in the world, some things are to be observed for vindication of His holy ways:

1st. It is most firmly and undoubtedly to be believed and asserted, that from God proceedeth nothing but that which is good; as is clear from James i. 13. Lam. iii. 38. "Out of the mouth of the most High proceedeth not evil and good;" the most holy One of Israel is altogether spotless and innocent, and no ways the author of cause of sin. And when it is said[u], *Is there any evil in the city which the Lord hath not done?* this is to be understood of the evil of punishment, not of the evil of sin.

Upon the other part, the devil and man's corrupt nature are the only causes and authors of sin[w]. Wickedness proceedeth from the wicked[x].

2ndly. It is to be considered, that divine Providence is not so careless or unconcerned about these evils which are committed by devils and wicked men, as if God gave them such an absolute and full permission as to do whatever they list. No, verily; he limits and restrains them, that they can go no farther than he permits; as is clear in many instances; as in that of Job: Providence so hedged up Job, that Satan could neither touch him, nor any thing of his; the first permission that God gave to Satan against Job was in his means and goods, and

[q] Psm. xviii. 17. [r] Verse 12. [s] Rom. i. 24, 26.
[t] Eph. ii. 2. [u] Amos iii. 6.
[w] 1 Sam. xxi. 23. [x] James i. 14.

to this he is limited; but he permits him to do nothing to his person. Next, God gives him a more ample permission, but in this he limits him too; he gives him power to afflict his body, but not to touch his life[f].

When the devils were thrust out of the man, they could not enter into the swine, till Christ permitted them[e]. He sets limits to the raging seas, to devils, and to men; if the Lord but suspended his concourse from all created causes, they must instantly stop in their most furious career: God limits his permission to devils and men; he so rules and oversways them in the actions which he suffers them to do, that he turns them about to his own glory, and the good of his saints, and bringeth good out of their evil.

3rdly. We must distinguish betwixt God's act of permission, and the things that men do act when they are suffered and permitted. God's act of permission is most just and righteous; for what can be more just than that men who will have none of God, nor of his counsel, shall in God's righteous judgment be left to their own counsels; and the Lord himself giveth this as a most just and relevant reason why he left his Israel to walk in counsels of their own[g]. The Lord giveth it out, that for this cause he sent upon men strange delusions, that they should believe lies, and might be damned, who believed not the truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness; and this because they received not the love of the truth that they might be saved[h]. Whence we see, that divine justice is pure and spotless in leaving men to their own evil ways, and to themselves, who would have none of him or his ways; and such who are disobedient to God and his Spirit, are most justly given over to that spirit which ruleth in the children of disobedience.

[e] Job ii. 6. [f] Matt. viii. 31.
[g] Psalm lxxxi. [h] 2 Thess. ii. 10, 17.

4thly. In these sinful acts which men deserted of God do commit, we must distinguish between the act itself and the vitiosity of the act, or the obliquity which cleaveth to it: the act itself is physically good in so far as it is a natural motion of the soul, or body; for all entities are good and God is the author of all positive entities; therefore as to the natural entity and being of the act itself, God not only simply permits it, but giveth a natural concourse which co-operates with man in the production of the act, even as he giveth to the fire a natural power of heat and burning, and his concourse actually to burn.

As when a man sets fire to his neighbour's house, and burns it, the man only is blameable, who misapplied the natural agent to a wrong object; but neither is the fire to be blamed, nor the Lord for not withdrawing his concourse, to impede the operation of the fire. God doth but uphold the established course of nature, and the beings and qualities of his own creatures. By a like reason in morality, God by concurring with men in a physical way, upholding their power and faculties to act suitably to the nature of free agents, in producing natural actions, which physically as they are actions and entities are physically good; I say, God by granting a physical concourse is no ways to blame; man who misapplies this action to a wrong object, and to a prohibited matter, he only is to blame; seeing this wrong election is made by the choice of his own free-will; and that contrary to the revealed will and pleasure of God, whether is it any imputation to the Almighty that he doth not stop or hinder the will of man from pitching upon a wrong object? God is under no tie nor obligation to do so; he is obliged to none, but sheweth mercy on whom he will shew mercy, and whom he will, he hardeneth.

But, it may be objected, "that seeing God hath laid upon man as a duty to hinder his neighbour

from doing evil, and bringing on sin upon his soul so far as lieth in his power, it were an act of great mercy in God, who is infinite goodness, to hinder man from doing evil, seeing he is able to do it, yea, although God is under no law, or obligation to do so, yet God is a law to himself."

Whatsoever the Lord doth is good, and holy, and just.—God's goodness is infinite and hath no limits; his goodness appears in acts of justice, as well as in acts of mercy: there is no less goodness in punishing a bloody murderer who lieth in wait for blood, than in saving the innocent and harmless person: it is, therefore, a great mistake to think that goodness stands only in shewing acts of favour and mercy. Yea it no less appears in the operating acts of justice, God is glorified in the one, as well as in the other. And, therefore, if permitting men to follow their own impious counsels, who have wilfully rejected the counsel of God, and in suffering such to run on to their own damnation, who have rejected God's salvation, and in executing justice on them who have despised mercy, be a most just and righteous thing with God, as infallibly it is, then it is a good thing and most just with God to suffer men, and not hinder them, to choose their own ways, and perish in them.

God hath, indeed, by his precepts and the laws of charity, tied us to hinder our neighbour from doing evil, and that so far as in us lies: and we trangress if we do not: but God is under no law nor tie to hinder men, and therefore doth no wrong in permitting; yet notwithstanding this, God out of his abundant free goodness doth more to hinder man from committing evil, than he hath obliged us to do; or than we are able to do: for all that we can do, or are tied to do, by the laws of charity, is, by all fair means, to admonish, exhort, persuade, and intreat men, to forbear from evil. All this the Lord doth, and much more; he commands them by his sovereign authority, he exhorts them by his

word, strives by his Spirit giving secret checks to their hearts, by the light and testimony of their own conscience. He giveth men health, strength, food, raiment, peace, prosperity, plenty, and all the good things of this life; he deters them from evil by the threatening of death and damnation; he allures them to that which is good by the sweet and precious promises of eternal life: all these are more than any man can do, or is obliged to do. After the rejecting of all those divine endeavours, it is a most just thing with God to leave, and utterly reject such base and unworthy creatures. What! shall the great and dreadful majesty of the omnipotent and everlasting God, still suffer base worms, the works of his hands, which he hath formed out of the dust, whom he followed so long with tender mercies and long-suffering patience, and yet after all this, that man should most wilfully, obstinately, and impiously trample upon the bond of his divine authority, and the precious blood of his blessed son! Shall God after all this, not avenge himself in justice upon such workers of iniquity!—Shall not the Lord vindicate his own glory, in executing his righteous judgments? Shall he not leave them to themselves; can God be infinitely just, and not do himself the justice of vindicating his own glory?

Object. That which is best and right for God's glory is most to be desired; but to prevent and keep back men from sinning seems better, than to permit them to sin; and to save them seems more for his glory, than to destroy them. God delights in mercy, rather than in executing judgment.

For answer, we would consider those truths which amongst men ought to be unquestionable, *viz.* that God doth all things, (and whether they be acts of mercy or justice) for his own glory. Next, that God knoweth much better than man what is fittest for his own glory. Thirdly, that the rules and measures whereby to judge what is good or best, is *not* our will, or reason, or convenience, so as that

were always best which we judge best, or seems most convenient for us; but in this the will of God is the infallible standard. Fourthly, that although our shallow capacities cannot possibly reach the depth of God's unsearchable judgments; and although we cannot see the reason of his will; yet it is most reasonable and just; this we are to believe of him who is infinitely good and infinitely just, and therefore however to us it might seem best to keep back men from sin and perdition, yet seeing God doth otherways, we are to conclude unquestionably that what he does is most for his own glory, and therefore best, and better it is that God be glorified in what way and manner he pleases, than the creature should be saved who dishonours him.

Furthermore, touching the mercy and goodness of God, and all his other attributes, it is to be considered, that they are infinitely great, so that none can be greater than another; they are infinitely good, and so none can be more amiable than another; they are infinitely beloved of God, so that none can be more or less beloved. But, God who is the author of order, doth all things in the best order, and in his own operations observe the best and most orderly way of working; and when he is about to exercise his mercy and his justice, he is pleased in his order and method of working to give the precedence to mercy; but this priority of order infers no majority, as if mercy were greater than justice, or more beloved than the other; this only shews that God had rather that mercy should prevail with men, and they might obtain it[a]. "For I have no pleasure in him that dieth." But when mercy is insolently rejected, and man will have none of him, then is it time for justice to work; and when men have reduced themselves to such sad circumstances, as to render themselves the deserved

[a] Ezekiel xviii. 32, 33.

objects of wrath, then God's holy justice calls for it, that God should execute his righteous judgments: and we must not think but God is well pleased and takes delight in the exercise of justice, as well as in the exercise of his mercy, according to what is said, Deut. xxviii. 63. *And it shall come to pass, as the Lord rejoiced over you to do you good, and to multiply you; so the Lord will rejoice over you to destroy you.* Which scripture sheweth, that the Lord taketh equal pleasure in executing justice when he is put to it, as in shewing of mercy.

It may be objected that this seems opposite to other scriptures, which as plainly say, that God taketh no pleasure in the death of him that dieth, but that he should live[b].

There is no real opposition or contradiction in scripture; truth cannot be contrary to truth; but we often through ignorance mistake, and do not distinguish things that differ; therefore we must distinguish between the punishing of the wicked, as it is a tormenting of his own creature and of the work of his hand; and in this the Lord taketh no pleasure according to his word, and by the mouth of Ezekiel; but upon the other hand to consider the death of a man, not as a man but as a wicked enemy to God, and as this punishment is an act of divine justice, and tends to the glorifying of God; in his holy justice, in this respect, God rejoiceth, and is well pleased[c]. This difference may appear even in a good and just judge, who is abundantly satisfied to impose affliction, rather than death itself, upon a guilty criminal; and yet takes no pleasure in the torments of him as he is a man, but in this respect pities him—therefore as God takes pleasure in his own honour and glory, which he preferreth to all things, he must also take

[b] Ezekiel xviii. 32, 33, &c. [c] Deut. xxviii. 63.

pleasure in that which himself doth for the advancement of his glory, whether it be by acts of mercy or justice.

But it may be objected, "that if the sins and judgments which wicked persons, deserted of God, fall into, did only affect themselves, the matter were not much; but it is hard that they shall also be permitted to do such injuries to godly and innocent persons."

What punishments wicked men are permitted to inflict upon wicked men, will be acknowledged to be just; so likewise even those things which in the wicked are permitted to afflict the godly, in respect of God are also holy and just, though not in respect of their persecutors. There is no man so just and holy before God, but he deserves much more than ever the Lord inflicted upon him by the hand of the most wicked. When the godly have transgressed against the Lord, it is just that he chastise them though by wicked hands. Though David was a clement prince, and an indulgent father to Absalom, so that he had no reason so to use his father: yet God was just in punishing him for the matter of Uriah. Moreover, the Lord makes these punishments tend to the spiritual good and advantage of his own. And as for such godly persons whom the Lord afflicts by the hand of the wicked, not so much for their sin, as for the trial and exercise of their faith and patience: as in the case of Job; in this permission, God did no injustice to Job, and so the good man acknowledged himself, when he said, *The Lord hath given, and the Lord hath taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord*[q]. Job had nothing but what God gave him, and when he took it away, he took but his own: but in this the Devil, the Chaldeans, and Sabeans, were most impious and unjust. Yea, in this very trial, God intended nothing but what was good and just, viz. to make Job more humble and patient,

[q] Job i. 21.

to refine his faith, to prove his sincerity, and to make it appear that he was no hypocrite.

But to the end greater clearness may be afforded in this matter, and human actions may the better be understood, we would consider our actions as to their nature, principles, and morality; and wherein the morality of an action consists; whereby it is made good or bad.

Our actions themselves, as to their physical entity or being, are the operation of our souls and bodies; the morality of our actions depends upon the conformity to the law and rule of manners; and that is the will and command of God.

We must distinguish betwixt our immanent and transient acts; immanent acts are those which reside within the soul itself, and the soul is both their efficient and recipient; the fountain whence they flow, and the cistern wherein they are received; so that in regard of them, the soul is both active and passive.

Transient acts are such as operate upon some external object, which require the exercise of the senses and organs of the body for their exertion.

The virtuous disposition, law, and inclination of the mind after charity, is an immanent act; when a man according to his disposition actually distributes to the relief of the poor, this is a transient act of charity. The love a man beareth to temperance, sobriety, and chastity in the inward man, is a virtuous act before God, but immanent. When, moreover, a man moderates his taste about meats and drinks, and bodily pleasures, this is a transient act affecting the outward man.

The external and transient acts of virtue, are only truly virtuous and laudable by participation of goodness from the virtuous and good disposition of the mind. The outward act of giving alms is not an outward act of true charity and virtue, when it comes from a mind moved by pharisaical ostentation. The abstinence of a man from meats, drinks, and

carnal pleasures for a time, in whose inward man notwithstanding is rooted the love and predominant habit of sensuality and lasciviousness; these external acts, are not the true acts of their virtues.

The physical entity of an act is distinct from the morality of it, and of distinct consideration; this we are to consider in its source or principle. The principle of all our actions is the soul, it being the fountain both of life and motion. The soul exerciseth its operations by the faculties wherewith it is endued inwardly, and by the members of the body outwardly.

The spiritual substance of the soul is the radical principle, and the faculties of the soul are the formal principles, of our actions, dispositions, and habits; infused or acquired, and superadded to facilitate our faculties in their operations.

The rational soul of man is fitted, by the Author of nature, with its principal faculties; all of which are most necessary for a moral agent; and these are the understanding, reason, and will. The first faculty is intellective, and the second is discursive, the third elective.

1st. Man must know and understand what he doth, and therefore he must have knowledge and intelligence to judge of things, and to propose a right end of his actions; in order to which, he must steer his course, direct and govern his doings. 2dly, Because the end must be obtained by the use of means; he stands in need of a discursive faculty to weigh, ponder, and consider what means are fit and what not; and amongst those which are fit, which *fittest;* and so by his discursive judgment pitches upon such as his practical judgment determines as fittest. 3dly. In cometh the will or elective faculty; and it consents and actually chuses such a mean as the practical judgment dictates to be best and fittest; or, at sometimes, according to its native liberty and freedom, pitches on such as best pleaseth itself:

the will doth not always follow the dictates of the practical understanding.

To know, discourse, and chuse are natural actions of the soul, they are physically good, being natural entities, having God and nature for their author; but morally they are neither good nor bad, but capable of either; they are good when they are set upon good objects, and for good ends, (for we say that actions are specifical from their objects and ends); but to make moral actions good, several things are required besides these two; viz. That they proceed from good principles and motives, and be carried on by good means. Actions are bad when they are destitute of these. Yet, we do not say, that the least defect, though in circumstances, renders the whole action evil; but only in so far as that circumstance reacheth. An action may be materially good, and yet in other respects evil; so that it is neither adequatly good, nor adequatly evil; but the denomination is to be taken from the greater and principal part, which chiefly specificates the matter; and yet some notable defects, though in the meaner things of the action, may so far overcloud that which seems to be done aright, as may make the actor lose both his reputation of well doing and the reward.

But seeing physical acts are the subject or foundation of moralities, we will next consider wherein morality consists, and what are those things which make up the morality of an action.

Morality stands in the conformity of an action to the rule of manners; and the great and supreme rule of our actions and manners is the will and holy law of God; so that if the action be conformed to the will and law of God, it is good; but if it be not, it is bad.

A law is an ordinance of superior powers obliging to obedience, and it is either divine or human; the one is by God's authority, the other is by man's.

The law of God is distinguished into the law of nature, and into positive law. The law of nature is founded upon the nature of things themselves, and is conformed to the dictates of right reason and common equity.

This which we call the law of nature is indeed the law of God; but called the law of nature, because founded upon that common equity, which the very nature of the things themselves and right reason require; it is also called the law of nature because it is imprinted naturally in the hearts of men, and is distinguished from those laws we have by revelation. God did at first imprint upon man's nature a perfect knowledge and copy of his will to be a law to him; and this knowledge was one of the grand characters of God's image, which principally stands in these three, *viz.* knowledge, righteousness, and true holiness, according to the apostle[h].

The fall did miserably deface the image of God in man, and the gift of original righteousness was quite lost. Yet is not the image of God so totally extinguished but there yet remain the indelible characters of Deity, and that this Deity is to be feared, honored and worshipped. There remain also some shaken seeds, some broken stumps, and imperfect notions of moral honesty and common equity, even in those who have not the revelation of positive laws;—of the Gentiles it is said, Rom. ii. 14. *For when the Gentiles who have not the law, do by nature the things contained in the law; these having not the law, are a law unto themselves.* ver. 15. *Which sheweth the work of the law written in their hearts.*

The law of nature is also called eternal and perpetual; it changes not as positive laws do, and the reason is, this law is founded upon the nature of things and common equity, and therefore as long

[h] Coloss. iii. 10. Eph. iv. 24.

as nature itself stands firm and unchanged, the former must continue.

From what is said, it may appear that although the law of God (as comprehended in the law of nature and scripture revelation) be the supreme rule of our actions, especially in reference to God, yet other things, besides what is expressly recommended in scripture, may be lawfully done, and prove acceptable to God, even when enjoined by human authority, when high necessities, experience, and the advancement of God's glory and the service of the church call for it.

Having spoken of the supreme rule of our actions, *viz.* God's law whether natural or revealed, we come next to consider the secondary rules of our actions; and of these, we may specify four, *viz.* the law of nations, the law of necessity, the law of our superiors, and the law of conscience.

The law of nations may be said to be those common maxims and practices of morality which are holden good by the universal consent of mankind, and generally practised by nations, and are moralities next to the very prime laws of nature; such as, that hospitality is to be used towards strangers, no injury is to be done to public messengers and ambassadors; public faith, oaths and covenants, and truces, are to be kept inviolable. What is universally held good by the consent of all men may be safely followed as a rule, though we have no divine revelation; and things of this kind we are to take as the dictates of God in human nature; we must not be contrary to all men, this the apostle holds to be the black character of them that please not God[5].

The law of necessity sometimes doth sufficiently warrant our actions before God: thus David's hunger and necessity did warrant him to eat of the shew bread, which was not lawful for any man to eat but

[5] Thess. ii. 15.

the priests; and our Saviour himself justifies him in it[h]. Necessity, though it hath not a law, yet it is a law to itself, and sometimes taketh off the obligation of other positive laws, though of divine institution. God will have mercy rather than sacrifice: When two duties do so interfere that both cannot possibly be done, the lesser is to give place to the greater.

The law of our superiors, whom God hath placed in authority over us, is also a part of that rule which directs and warrants our actions. The authority with which they are clothed is of God,—in obeying them we obey God. We are commanded to submit ourselves to every ordinance of man, for the Lord's sake, 1 Pet. ii. 13. for conscience sake, Rom. xiii. 5, &c. This is a duty not to be forgotten. *Put them in mind to be subject to principalities and powers, to obey magistrates*[i]. And those who will not be subject for conscience sake, expose themselves to wrath[k]. The personal faults and infirmities of our superiors are to be borne with by us, as children towards their parents. We should not scoff and mock at them, as cursed Ham did at his father's nakedness; for which a curse cleaved to him and his posterity: but should rather cast the vail of our compassions and fervent prayers over them, as Shem and Japhet did; for which they received the blessing. We are still to reverence them, regard and obey God's authority in them, when they command nothing contrary to his will; and if they do, we are to suffer rather than sin.

Conscience is that light which God hath set up in every intelligent and rational creature to direct them, admonish, and censure them; it exercises the office of a lawgiver in directing them; of a monitor and witness to advertise or testify *for* or *against* them; of a judge to sentence them.

Conscience is the clearest beam of divine light,

[h] Matt. xii. 3, 4, &c. [i] Tit. iii. 1. [k] Rom. xiii. 5.

and of the image of God in the soul of man; it is the purest fountain of morality, and that which most hardly admits of a wrong bias. When men are most corrupt in their judgments, vitious in their wills and affections, debauched in their profane practices; yet their conscience will still check and challenge them.

Conscience is a light which God hath set up in man to be a witness. The malice of devils and men cannot totally extinguish it, but of necessity they must believe there is a God to judge and punish them, notwithstanding all their endeavours to extinguish this light, and of their desires to believe that there is not a God. They may sear, cauterize, and stupify their conscience; yet, as a drunken man, it awaketh out of sleep, though it speak not distinctly and efficaciously. So much, however, shall they know by the voice, and smatterings of it, that it is alive. Conscience is either the best friend, or the worst enemy a man hath.

Conscience is of high esteem amongst all. It is our perpetual companion, and most useful in all our actions; it is much spoken of, but little known—much professed, but little practised. Some mistake the very nature of conscience so far, that they take other things for it; and that which is will, humour, and interest, in them they call their conscience. The reason of this seems to be, conscience is a thing tender and sacred, and not to be violated, and they flee to it as a sanctuary. If you ask them a reason for what they do, instead hereof they will tell you it is their conscience; if you ask them a reason why they will not do such things, which either the law of God or human authority commands, they tell you, it is for their conscience sake they cannot do it. You must stop and go no further; this is a sufficient salve for all things, this is the strong buckler under which men may do all things or nothing, according as their will, humour, or interest, inclines them; it is ready upon all occasions. Ye

can no sooner draw the sword of the sharpest wit and strongest reason, nor bring forth the most express precepts of the word of God, nor any law or ordinance of man, enforced by the strength of supreme authority, but the buckler of conscience is ready at hand to repel all that can be said; the exercise of this piece of armour is so easily learned, that the dullest blockhead can take it up at the first reading.

Others there are, who very unhappily mistake the measures, authority, and limits of conscience; allowing it more than is due to it; extending its legislative power beyond whatever God assigned it. Hence arise errors of very dangerous consequence. It is most fit that in a matter of so much importance, we make some enquiry after the nature, power, and office of conscience.

Conscience, as to the signification of the name, imports a knowing together with another. There is a science presupposed, and a conscience: this may relate either to God, or to ourselves. God knows a thing, and together with God, we know it: or it may relate to ourselves, we know speculatively by the word of God, and by sure reason that such a thing is good; and yet, by a reflex knowledge, we know also that we have neglected and not done that good. The direct act of our knowledge is science, the reflex act whereby we consider our ways and doings, is that which more precisely is conscience; knowledge directs conscience, and conscience presupposes knowledge.

Conscience is a natural faculty of the rational soul; and, to shun philosophical niceties, metaphysical precisions, and unintelligible definitions, and deal so plainly in a matter of such importance as can be, we find no necessity to make conscience a faculty in itself, really distinct from the other faculties of the soul, but to be radically and upon the matter the same with them; and is exercised in all the faculties of the soul, in the understanding, will,

memory, &c. Our understandings must make conscience to enquire after the knowledge of some things. Our memories must make conscience to retain. Our wills must make conscience to desire or hate.

But if it shall be inquired, to which of the faculties conscience is to be reduced, and in which of them doth it specially reside? We hesitate not to say, that it is radically in the understanding; this being the principal faculty of the soul. Conscience is the clearest beam, and the most eminent ray of knowledge in the understanding, the most divine thing in man, the very eminence, cream, and flower of the soul.

The third thing which is of greatest importance, and difficult to be found out, and of greatest danger if we mistake in it, respects the obligatory powers of conscience, and how far it hath force to bind us, and what are the limits of its jurisdiction.

It is acknowledged by all, that conscience hath a kind of legislative power and force in it to bind us, according to the ordinary expression; but seeing conscience is neither the only, nor the supreme, nor the absolute lawgiver of our actions; but a secondary, subordinate, and limited judge, we would consider what others have power over us, and in what course and view conscience comes in, and what are the matters committed to its jurisdiction.

We have three who are cloathed with authority over our actions; viz. God, our superiors, and our own conscience. God is absolute Lord and Lawgiver, his commands are all most holy and just, he can neither deviate nor be obtruded. When he says the word, all that is incumbent on our conscience is, humbly and conscientiously to obey, without disputing, contradicting, or murmuring; he it is that giveth the law to our conscience.

The *second* power or authority which hath right

to rule over us, and command our actions, are our superiors; these powers, who are God's deputies and vicegerents upon earth, and whom he hath commanded us to obey for the Lord's sake, and for the sake of conscience, upon the peril of his wrath, as is very clear from scripture[1].

The power of those whom God hath invested with power and authority over us, is greater in one point of view, than that of our conscience, and the reason is very clear; 1st. In regard that God, from whom all power and right is derived, hath not given to the conscience of any private man, such an eminent measure of power and authority, as he hath given to magistrates.

That which is highly remarkable is, that God in his word hath given most clear and express revelations concerning the power of magistrates, and that we ought to submit to them, obey them, and not resist them; and yet hath given no declaration concerning the power of our conscience, nor what obedience is due to it; let it be hence considered which of the two are first and chiefly to be obeyed in secular concerns; whether superiors, whose power he hath declared, and to whom our obedience is commanded, or the dictates of our own private conscience, in reference to which neither of these is done.

2d. Moreover the laws of a nation being compiled by the joint consultations of men of knowledge, prudence, and experience, best versed in the acts and laws of government, who are chosen for this effect as men of confidence; and then those determinations receiving the force of a law from the supreme authority and lawgiver, and being fastened upon the subjects and their obedience thereunto required. Is it not to be presumed that those edicts are preferable to the dictates of a private conscience? Can private men rationally presume themselves to

[1] Rom. xiii. 1, 2, 5. Tit. iii. 1. 1 Pet. ii. 13. Heb. xiii. 7.

be wiser and more conscientious than a collective body of many wise men? And shall a private conscience of some, be preferable to the public conscience of many? Is it safer to guide ourselves, than to be guided by those who are wiser than ourselves?

3dly. Lastly, that laws and public authority are superior to the laws and dictates of private men's conscience, is a thing that must be, otherwise all laws and authority, magistrates and magistracy, would be ineffectual. Anarchy and confusion must inevitably follow. When men will not be governed by laws, but every man doth what seemeth good in his own eye, this were to make every man a judge of the law, and not a doer of it.

Let both reason and conscience speak if this were a thing just or equitable, or consonant to the wisdom and honour of an earthly prince, to convene his grand counsel or parliament; appoint them to contrive good and wholesome laws for the government of the kingdom. This being done, he enacts them, touches them with his sceptre, causes proclaim them, commands his subjects to obey them; and yet, in the meantime, gives private power and warrant to every one of his subjects to reject or receive, obey or disobey, according to their own pleasure. Were not this to set up laws with the one hand, and pull them down with the other? This were such a ridiculous absurdity in the matter of police, as the meanest witted and imprudent prince on earth was never yet found to be guilty of, and yet those high pretenders of conscience do most foolishly and inconscientiously charge the Almighty with no less; while they pretend, that notwithstanding God hath so expressly commanded us obedience to the ordinance of men, for the Lord's sake, 1 Peter ii. 13, &c. for conscience sake, Rom. xiii. 5. And hath openly proclaimed this in the scriptures, and yet to pretend that they cannot obey, because conscience prohibits them.

All will grant that God hath supreme power, is a Lord and Lawgiver of the conscience, and that the conscience ought not to contradict his commands; yet many deny in works what they confess in words, and they set up the dictates of that which they call the conscience above the commands of God. The Lord hath commanded us to honor his sabbaths, to reverence his sanctuary, to obey the voice of his messengers, to live in peace and unity amongst ourselves, not to resist superior powers; yet many cast all those commands behind their back, and do the quite contrary, and pretend *conscience* for all.

But as for human powers upon earth, they think they may take the greatest latitude to themselves. It is to be confessed that all the men on earth, and all the powers on earth, are incomparably and infinitely below the Almighty God, if compared with him; but let them be considered in regard of us, and it is to be remembered that they are above us, and God calls them superior powers, yea, supreme powers, (viz. on earth)[m]. They are God's ordinances, we are commanded to obey them; the power whereby they act and rule us is from God, and therefore in resisting them, God accounts it a resisting of his ordinance. It is not only on them, but on God himself our disobedience terminates. Therefore we would take heed how far we meddle with them, lest we be found fighting against God. Consider, likewise, that neither law, nor conscience, nor custom itself, will judge it proper that superior powers shall be brought down from their thrones, and sisted as pannels at the bar of inferior benches; how then can the consciences of private men presume to bring down their superiors to stand before the bench of their private conscience; there to be judged, their actions canvassed, their laws rejected, rescinded, obeyed or not obeyed, at their

[m] Rom. xiii. 1.

pleasure? Is this conscience?—Is not this stubbornness, pride, willfulness, ignorance, and not conscience? Such persons forget their own stations and capacities; that they are subjects: they have forgotten what God hath prescribed to be the office and duty of their conscience to their superiors, and this is not to offend them, but to keep a conscience void of offence towards God and man,

But seeing, according to the common notion and persuasion of all men, conscience hath a rule and conduct of men's actions; we come now, in the third place, to enquire what are the matters, wherein conscience is to act, and no further; that marches may be cleared.

To this we say negatively; 1st. It is not the office or duty of any man's conscience to oppose, contradict, or disobey divine laws; but humbly and submissively to yield all conscientious obedience to them. 2d. Neither is it the office or part of any man's private conscience to disparage, disobey, or rebutt against supreme authority and the public laws of the commonwealth; for every private man is a member of the commonwealth and a subject, and so is under authority of the public political head; private persons are to receive laws and rules from their governors, but not to prescribe laws to them. Their capacities and station oblige them to be ruled, but not to rule and govern their governors; therefore all that God and a good conscience require at their hands, is, with discretion, to consider what is commanded, and what is good and lawful to make conscience to obey it, for this which God requireth of us.

3dly. But, in the third place, possibly we say, our personal actions and private affairs, which are not predetermined by a supreme authority, divine or human, are the matters which are left to the command, rule, and conduct of our own private consciences. In these we have our own freedom, and in this both God and man have left us to our own

freedom. We may chuse what in prudence and conscience we think best; it is within those limits that the conscience must exercise any legislative power or obligation, it can pretend to have, and if it stretch itself beyond those lines it goes without its sphere, and meddles with matters above it.

But this caution is carefully to be observed, that we distinguish betwixt the discretionary power of conscience, and its legislative power; the conscience hath indeed a discretionary power, which it may and ought to exercise about the laws of God and man, whereby it is to consider the goodness, equity, morality, and reasonableness of such laws, that so man may not act as a brute, but as an intelligent moral agent, who knows what and why he doth; and so with an enlightened and good conscience, may perform a reasonable service.

But as to the legislative power of conscience in private men, God hath not empowered nor called them either to make public laws, (that is, committed to public authority), or to pull down those which are made, this were to destroy all government and authority.

There are two extremes in the matter of conscience very dangerous, on which many do rush to their own great hurt. The one is, that many make little or no account of keeping a good conscience; they make shipwreck of it. There are some, of whom it is said, that their conscience is defiled [n]; and that their conscience is seared with a hot iron [p]. They disregard the voice of God and their own conscience. There are another sort who run to the opposite extreme, who magnify their own conscience above all that is called God; yea, the most express laws of Jesus Christ they contemn, slight, and prefer to them the dictates of their own erroneous conscience; they make their conscience their Bible, their Lord, and their Lawgiver; they think themselves suffici-

[n] Tit. i. 15. [p] 1 Timothy

ently warranted to do what they please, or leave undone what they list, if so be their conscience (as they pretend) allow them; they plead for such immunities upon the account of their consciences, and suppose themselves to be set above the reach of all check from any power upon earth.

We shall take notice of something on which they build the monarchy and sovereignty of conscience.

One argument, by which they try to prove the sovereignty of conscience, is, that conscience is God's deputy and vicegerent in man; the voice of conscience is supposed to be the voice of God, and whatever any power on earth says to the contrary, the voice of God in the conscience is to be preferred.

To this grand objection or argument we return these considerations for clearing the case: 1st. we grant that God hath placed in every man a conscience to be as a light to direct him, to warn and check him; a judge to acquit and condemn him; this is the office of the conscience according to God's intention and primary institution; and for this end is conscience called God's deputy and vicegerent in man, and the voice of it is supposed to be the voice of God. But upon the other part, it is as true, that as his fall did crush, deface, disorder, and debilitate all the other faculties of his soul, so also that of the conscience, by reason whereof, it is not now able rightly to exercise the function first committed to it; neither is it true, that every man's conscience is to be supposed to be the voice of God, but oftentimes it is the voice of Satan. There is an evil conscience, an ignorant conscience, an erroneous conscience, a cauterized conscience; and no man can suppose these consciences to be the voice of God. If man had stood in his primitive integrity, much more could be said in favour of conscience than can rationally be pretended now in its lapsed condition. And to descend to particulars, on examining the offices of

conscience, and its abilities to perform them, it will easily appear, that no such confidence is to be put in the infallibility of some men's consciences, as they vainly pretend to. The office and exercise of the conscience may be comprised in these three acts, 1st. It directs us by its light and knowledge. 2dly. By a reflex act it examines and compares our actions with the rules of religion and right reason, whether they be conformed to these or not. 3dly. It pronounces sentence *for*, or *against* us; now if conscience fail in all or any of these, it is clear that it is not any such safe guide, to be trusted and followed without all doubt or hesitation. How fallible it is in all of these may easily appear; first if we consider what darkness, blunders, ignorance, and error are upon the understandings and minds of men, even of the best; and that the light of our conscience, is nothing else but that light which is in our minds and intellects; we have not reason to be too confident that this light will prove an unerring and infallible guide. 2dly. If we consider the second act of conscience, which is to compare our actions with the rule, how apt are we to mistake the true measures and proportions of the rule, and how often do ignorance, interest, prejudice, and self-love bias us, in thinking that we are walking exactly according to the rule, when it is not so. *All the ways of a man are clean in his own sight, but the Lord weigheth the spirits*[q]. 3dly. Consider the third act of conscience, which is to give sentence upon a man's actions, and how often doth the conscience err in this? Oftentimes the erroneous conscience justifies man in those things wherein they are truly condemnable, and condemns that which is justifiable. But if it be replied, that although a mere natural conscience instructed by the mere light of nature be a defective guide; yet a sanctified and renewed conscience, instructed by

[q] Prov. xvi. 2.

the scripture and illuminated by the Spirit of God, is a very safe and sure guide, and by no means to be declined.

We would not let pass without notice, the versatility of some such persons in shifting from one thing to another. First, they pretend conscience itself, and then shift the state of the question, and fly to scripture and divine illumination. Why will they not say that scripture and divine illumination is that which we ought to follow and obey absolutely and implicitly? For scripture is not that which we properly call conscience, but it is the rule of conscience; neither is conscience properly that which we call scripture or supernatural illumination; but it seems they would have conscience and scripture synonimous words, signifying one and the same thing; so that to walk by scripture is to walk by their conscience, and to walk according to their conscience is all one as to walk according to scripture; but these are very different, for many times men walk according to conscience, when they are walking quite contrary to scripture.

2dly. But what they say of their conscience conducted by scripture and illuminated, I pray how many ignorant, self-conceited persons of these times do miserably misinterpret and wrest scripture to their own perdition? and yet their conscience thinks they are walking according to scripture, and when they are walking after their own blind and brainsick fancies, they think they are walking after the illuminations of the Spirit; hence it is, that the private conscience of every man, is not a fit interpreter of the scripture, nor a fit discerner to distinguish between divine illuminations and satanical illusions; and therefore such consciences can be no sure nor warrantable guide, nor be justly presumed to be the word of God.

Moreover, persons illuminated, sanctified, and regenerated, know but in part, and therefore ought

to be very humble, and not to be so confident as if they knew all things, and could not mistake.

2dly. But for a second answer, we say: if every private man will affirm that his own conscience is God's deputy, vicegerent, and voice, let him consider, that his conscience is but a private deputy, to order him in his own private actions, wherein he may determine himself; and in things that are not determined by the laws of God, and his superiors.

But, moreover, let him consider that God hath also greater and superior deputies, whose jurisdiction is higher and more extensive than any private person or his conscience. God hath supreme civil powers upon earth, whom we are commanded to obey. He hath also ecclesiastical officers in his house to be the guides of our souls, whose lips should prescribe wisdom and teach understanding, and at whose mouth we are to receive the law. Seeing that such persons as these are also God's deputies in a more public authoritative way, than any private man's own conscience, why are we not to hear them? and to presume that their consciences, as the voice of God, is to be followed and not disobeyed? Have we any scripture that speaks so expressly and clearly of the power of our own private consciences, as it doth of *their* power? Are we any where in scripture tied, and so strictly commanded to follow and obey the dictates of our own consciences, as we are commanded to be subject to them, and not resist them?

But it may be objected, that both civil and ecclesiastical rulers may err.

That they may err, and often do err, is no question; but may not private men's consciences err also? and is it not to be presumed, that private men, who walk by their own private notices, are much more likely to err, than persons whom God hath placed in public authority, assisted with more public and eminent aids than private persons, and have the

advantages of the public and private counsels of the best, wisest, and most learned of the land to consult about laws and governments? These, in all probability, are more likely to prescribe better what is fit for the public good of church and state, than any private persons can possibly do, who are remote and altogether unacquainted with the mysteries of government.

There may be many acts of government which to us, who know no better, seem quite wrong and unreasonable; yet, if we knew the secrets of state, the reasons and motives inducing them so to do, we would be of another mind.

A second argument men bring from the immunities and powers of conscience, and that conscience is not subject to man, nor can it be sisted at any human tribunal. It belongs to God's judgment-seat; it is God that gives laws to the conscience; he is Lord over it, and not man; therefore, we are not answerable to man for our consciences, nor to be punished by men for their dictates.

We grant, indeed, that God himself is Lord and Lawgiver to the conscience; and it is not at man's tribunal, but at God's, it must answer. But, upon the other part, it is true, that the superior powers on earth have dominion over our bodies and estates, over our lives and fortunes: they have power to make laws, and enact penal statutes; they have power to call us to an account for our external actions, and to punish our persons if we violate the laws of the commonwealth, and disturb the peace of the church. They are not concerned with our conscience, but with our external obedience or disobedience, that is all they look after; and we must not pretend that we have made insurrection, sedition, and rebellion, being moved thereto by our conscience, and therefore ought not to be punished, because we did it according to our conscience. The magistrate is not bound to take notice of the conscience of the criminal, (but refers that to God's

judgment-seat, to which it belongs) but to take notice of the crime itself; and for it, to punish the person according as the law of God and of the land requires.

For this cause we must distinguish betwixt the immanent elicit acts of the conscience, and its transient and imperate acts. The immanent elicit acts of the conscience are internal in the soul; remote from the knowledge of men; not liable to his laws; they are only subject to God and his spiritual law, though a man's private conscience judge it lawful to murder kings, overturn governments, use fire and sword against all good subjects; yet so long as this act, however bloody, remains hidden in the heart, the person is not punishable by man: but if the man vent the wickedness of his heart by words or deeds, then the acts of his conscience are transient; these acts are the imperate acts of the conscience, and so a man becomes criminal and punishable; so that a man is not properly punished for his conscience, but for the evil, external acts of a wicked conscience.

2dly. We say, that magistrates have not a direct, immediate power over man's conscience, obliging them in their conscience to think that good and lawful, true and just, which they determine by the laws to be so; whilst, may be, it is otherways. The understanding cannot be compelled to judge that to be a truth, which it clearly knows to be an error: nor can the will inwardly be forced to chuse that for good, which evidently it perceives to be evil; nor that to be a conscientious thing, which the conscience is sufficiently and rightly instructed to be against conscience: this is not what human powers lawfully claim; yet, we say, that magistrates have an indirect power from God, who hath direct power over the conscience, to make good and wholesome laws for the commonwealth, which the subject is bound to obey not only by

external evidence, but even for conscience sake[a]: if he makes not conscience to obey, he sins against God.

As touching an erroneous conscience, and of its binding power and force, divines make a distinction betwixt *ligare et obligare;* they say, an erring conscience, *ligat sed non obligat,* it binds us that we cannot, without sinning, do any thing contrary to our conscience; for what is not done of faith and persuasion is sin.

But they say, that an erring conscience hath no right nor power to oblige us to do that which is evil, unjust, or unlawful; and the reason of this is very clear, in reference to God and his divine laws. God is supreme Lord and Lawgiver, who hath power over us and our consciences; and where God imposes a law, our consciences cannot throw off the bond of divine authority; and by its own authority impose a contrary bond of its own making. God hath greater power over us than we have over ourselves, or any other power on earth; and when the erring conscience clasheth with the law of God, the person is brought under an infallibility of sinning, whether he obey the law of God or not; if he obey the law of God, he sins in regard of his conscience; because he doth it not in faith, but contrary to his conscience which is otherways persuaded, and what is not done of faith is sin. If he act according to his conscience, when it errs and deviates from the rule of God's word, he is also a transgressor, in regard he violates the commands of God; and every transgression of the law is a sin, though our conscience give never so full a consent unto it, for where there is divine law standing, not our conscience, but the law of God, is to be the rule and judge of what is sinful and what not.

But, it may be asked, when an erroneous conscience is principled with a strong persuasion, con-

[a] Rom. xiii. &c.

trary to divine truth or precept, what shall a person do in that case? He cannot be bound to believe that to be truth which they are persuaded to be an error; for this were to believe not only without faith, but even contrary to the faith and persuasion of his own conscience, which thinks the contrary; nor can he in faith act in obeying a precept which he thinks unjust; if he does he sins, and no man can be bound to sin.

God neither doth, nor can, bind any man to sin or commit evil; but, as to the case, when divine authority lays on a bond, the contrary persuasion of an erroneous conscience cannot take off the bond; this were to make man stronger than God; and therefore let the conscience err as wide as it will, and be as confident to the contrary as it can be, yet still the yoke of divine authority lieth on. That which God requireth of a man in such a case is, not that he give obedience with a doubting contradicting conscience, but that he lay aside his error and contradiction, and obey in faith and in truth, otherways he is still guilty. And for this cause, a man is with all humility and sincerity, to use all the means that God hath appointed for finding out the truth by prayer and supplication, by searching the scripture, by going to the law and to the testimony, by taking the advice of good and wise men, and the direction of those whom God hath appointed to be our spiritual guides.

But, divine authority must not be opposed by man's doubting and erroneous conscience, because he is supreme Lord and Lawgiver both over men's actions and consciences; yet the case will not hold in reference to human authorities, whose power is infinitely below the power of God, and they have not power over men's consciences, but only over their persons and actions in things civil and external; and therefore if they cannot obey them without sin, and to punish men for not doing that which they cannot do without sinning, seems most

unjust. There is nothing endears the hearts and affections of a people so much to their prince as mercy and clemency, and therefore it would argue much goodness to shew favour and indulgence to men of tender consciences. And it would argue great prudence in a prince, to bring down and accommodate his laws to the people's humour, when they cannot be got screwed up to the laws; it would prevent tumults and insurrections, which are of dangerous consequence.

This query, or doubt, composes the most substantial heads and nervous arguments used by some restless malcontents in this age, and because several things are here bundled up, we will take them apart and consider them distinctly. They may be ranked up in these particulars: 1st. The inferiority of human authority to divine. 2d. That human powers are not Lords over men's consciences, but over their external, civil actions. 3rd. That the powers do evil, in punishing men for not doing that which is against their conscience. 4th. That clemency and indulgence is so proper a thing for princes: and 5th. That princes would do wisely to accommodate their laws, and bring them down to their people's humour, if they find it difficult to bring them up to the height of the laws. 6th. And in the last place, there is a dreadful threat, that if this be not done, then tumults, insurrections, and all the evils that can follow, are to be expected.

1st. As to the first, it is granted, as a truth unquestionable amongst Christians, that God Almighty is infinitely above creatures and their power; and no power is to be obeyed contrary to the command of God. But, upon the other part, it is also a divine truth, that human powers are of God, and are ordained of God, and they that resist them, resist the ordinance of God, and receive unto themselves condemnation[b]. When God invests

[b] Rom. xiii. 1, 2.

men on earth with any part of his own power, and commands us to obey them, in obeying them we obey God himself, not men only or chiefly.

If the powers on earth command the same thing which God commands, we are bound to obedience upon a double command, both of God, and of his deputies and vice-gerents on earth; and disobedience in this case, is a rebellion both against God and man.

If the powers on earth command any thing contrary to the express command of God, we are no ways to give alike obedience, for it is better to obey God than man; but we must give passive obedience and suffer, for it is better to suffer than sin, and if we suffer for righteousness' sake happy are we[h]. But in noways are we to resist; resistance is absolutely forbidden, and that upon pain of condemnation, and thus even when the powers were tyrannical in passing many oppressive acts; yea, when they were heathenish and idolatrous, commanding many ungodly and profane things; yea, when they were antichristian, giving out many severe edicts, persecuting Christians, and all who called upon the name of Jesus; this was Paul's Gospel[i]. Such who now teach that Christian magistrates may be resisted, let them consider whether they be not preaching another Gospel than Paul taught, and what is the doom of such.

If the powers which God hath set over us command nothing contrary to God's commandments, but determine in such things as are left undetermined by God, then do they not unjustly; because they have power in such things, not being restrained by God who gave them power; and if they determine according to the advice of their grand counsels and parliaments, and according to the sentiments of the most wise, judicious, best, and most learned of the nation, in matters which are for the public good of

[h] 1 Pet. iii. 14. [i] Rom. xiii. 12.

the commonwealth, according to the opinion of those who best know the case of the commonwealth. It were ridiculous to think, that the sentiments of private men or their conscience (if they will have it called so) can overturn and resist the laws, authority, and public statutes of the kingdom; this were to overturn all government, and to let every man do what seemeth good in his own eyes, as if there were no king in Israel.

Laws and statutes being composed by the great wits of a kingdom, and by the consent of commissioners from all parts of the land, or the major part of them, being the representatives of the whole, and being executed by the legislative power and supreme authority of the prince, all the members of the commonwealth are obliged to stand to them, and virtually have consented to them by their commissioners. Besides, what may be said of one absolute and monarchical power, which may do many things without the consent of a people, those things thus enacted are to be obeyed, though grievous and inconvenient to many private persons.

Laws are made for the general good and convenience of a commonwealth, and private convenience must give way to the public; yea, though no great emolument should redound to the commonwealth, it is highly convenient and necesssary that public authority be not affronted; for how long shall our private interests stand firm, if public authority, by which they are secured, once becomes contemptible and despised? It is true, the wisest of men may err, and the wisest counsels may, yea, do oftentimes err; but it is as true and more probable, that private men both may and do err; and it is more fit they be doers of the law, than judges of the law[k].

The judges and rulers of the Jewish commonwealth, in ordinary judicatures, were not infallible more than judges are now; and yet, that controver-

[k] James iv. 7.

sies might not be perpetuated, but come to an end, God appointed his people to stand to their determinations, and if it be not so now, there would never be peace nor quiet in church nor state.

The second thing to be considered is, that God only is Lord and Master over the conscience; men have not power over the conscience, but over man in civil matters.

To this we say, that God is supreme Lord over men's bodies, actions, and consciences; yet God, who hath incorporated men in a public political body or commonwealth, hath, for the government of that great body, set over it some public supreme power, as his deputy and vice-gerent upon earth; the supreme power is authorized of God to rule the body, and laws are surely the best and fittest mean of government; they have power, not only to make laws, but to enact sanctions and penalties by death, confiscation of goods by mutilation or banishment, according to the nature of the guilt, the sanction of the law, or pleasure of the prince. This public body, and every member of it, must be ruled by law, in reference to their public politic actions. Whatever a man may do as a private man in his own affairs, wherein the public is not concerned; yet, as a member of the commonwealth, he is not at his own disposal, and, in reference to the public, must not be ruled by his own humour and private spirit, or by his own conscience; for this which is called his conscience, what else is it, but the sentiment and dictate of his own private reason, apprehension, judgment and practical understanding?

And which is much to be noticed, men would fain juggle in this matter; they will not in plain terms say, that they are wiser than the public counsels of the land, that they are more intelligent and rational, that their understandings and reason is preferable to the understanding of many wise and learned men; but for all this they will prefer their own private conscience to all these:

and what is that which they call their conscience? Is it any thing else but their own reason, practical judgment, sentiment, and persuasion of things? If it be any thing else let them name it. They place a great mystery in the word *conscience*, so that the same very material and individual thing, when it passeth under the name of reason, understanding, and judgment, they will grant that in this they are far short and below other men; but the same thing receiving another designation, and let it be called conscience, then, forsooth, it must be above all the powers on earth.

Suppose supreme powers on earth be not Masters or Lords over their conscience, yet they are Lords over the commonwealth, and have power over the lives and fortunes of men, and consequently over every individual member of the commonwealth, and over their actions, in so far as relates to the public actings of the politic body. Let men look to their consciences the best way they can, the magistrate must look to the public peace and safety of the commonwealth; private consciences must not break down the public laws and authority of the commonwealth.

And if they affirm, that no public authority hath power over the conscience, how can they think it reasonable that their own private conscience shall have power over the public authority and conscience of the prince, who is as well certified in his conscience that he is doing right, as they are of their consciences?

3dly. The third scruple and objection contained in the query is, that it is very unjust to punish men for their conscience, and for not obeying those laws which to obey is against their conscience, and to obey were in them a sin, it being against their conscience; this were to punish them for not doing that which were in them a sin.

To this it is to be replied, that the magistrate does not, in the least, pretend to punish the consciences

of men: that only belongs to God, at whose tribunal conscience is answerable; neither doth the magistrate properly punish men for their conscience, because they think and judge so and so in their minds and understandings. A man cannot command his own judgment, much less another man's; but that for which the magistrate punishes them, is for their disobedience to the laws for their external actions, for their misdemeanours, for their insolences, rebellions, and disorders in prejudice of the public peace and safety; and shall a man guilty of those crimes pass unpunished, because he pretends conscience moves him to these things? Are not unconscientious acts to be punished, otherways what criminal shall not escape, if he have but so much sense as to say his conscience moved him, and therefore he ought to go free. May not the blasphemer say, that he ought not to be punished for blaspheming Christ, because, being a Turk or a Jew, he was persuaded in his conscience that Christ was not the Messiah but a deceiver; the murderer may say, he was convinced in conscience, that he ought to take the life of such an injurious and villainous person.

If men's erroneous consciences state a false opinion in them, against the good and laudable laws of the commonwealth, so that being under a mispersuasion, and that their obedience to them would be a sin, is it unjust to punish them? What shall be said, then, of God's righteous judgment in punishing the nation of the Jews for not believing in Christ? Might they not argue upon the same head and say, Lord, we were persuaded in our conscience, that Christ the Son of Mary, was not the son of God; and being of this persuasion, we could not believe him to be thy Son; and it had been a sin in us to believe him so to be, while our consciences stood fixed in a contrary persuasion; therefore we cannot be justly punished for not believing that which to believe, in us had been a sin to do. The reason is alike in both cases, and, therefore, as men are bound

to lay aside their error and unbelief, and so receive the truth and faith of the gospel, so they are bound to lay aside their pride, passion, and contradictory humours, and obey the lawful commands of lawful authority; for whilst they retain both a prejudice and ungovernable humour, and to these add, stubbornness, disobedience and rebellion, shall they still be accounted unpunishable innocents? Judge, I pray you, if it be just and equitable, because a man commits one sin, therefore he ought not to be punished for another; some men are of stubborn, uncharitable, ungovernable humours and heart, enemies to royal government, and therefore opposite in their judgment to what proceeds from that authority; this is certainly a sinful and dangerous humour and principle in them, and whilst they stand in this humour, it goes against their minds and evil-principled conscience to obey the commands proceeding from that authority; shall we say that such persons ought not to be punished for their disobedience? And why, forsooth? because it were a sin to obey that authority against which their consciences hath reluctance. Such persons are punishable both by God and the magistrate; by God for that inward contempt and disdain they carry against his ordinances and vicegerents, and by the magistrates for their open disobedience; and that not only for the injury done to the magistrate or laws by their particular act, but for the public, dangerous, and bad example it gives, to others to disobey also.

I suppose a magistrate shall command a thing in itself not good nor just, and that a subject does right in not obeying that act, if it be not just to punish him for his disobedience; yet it is more tolerable that a good man patiently suffer, though unjustly, than disobedience to authority should pass unnoticed, because of the evil example and bad consequences might hereupon follow, for others in disobeying just commands might encourage themselves and others to evil with impunity.

It is to be regretted, that many now-a days do needlessly and curiously interest and involve their consciences in opposition and wranglings, and in matters not concerning them; and as Satan, the prince of darkness, undoes one part of mankind with atheism, profanity, and the work of the flesh, and of darkness and unconsionableness: so he can transform himself into an angel of light, and undo others by heresies, errors, by dubious and scrupulous consciences, such as by ignorance, imprudence, pride, willfulness, scrupulosities, and hypocrisies, and by mistaking the office and limits of their conscience.

Ignorance is a great cause of the doubts and scrupulosities of some men's consciences; were they more intelligent and rational they would not make half the noise they do; a thing may be very clear in itself, and intelligible to a man of understanding, of which the ignorant make a mountain, and raise a cloud of needless nonsensical scruples; folly and imprudence involve them to be meddling in matters not concerning them; thus every pedlar and mechanic whose calling leads them to be meddling with their calling chop and handy labour, they, forsooth, must be handling the helm of government, and canvassing all the affairs of church and state; and if things be not modelled and managed according to their foolish ridiculous fancies, presently those in authority are quite wrong, and they cannot in conscience obey them; he who cannot well manage his own plough and cottage must canvass and censure both church and state, and can a greater folly readily possess the head of a Bedlamite?

Pride blindeth the science of some, which being done conscience cannot but err; some have taken up an opinion upon trust from some person of whose piety and learning they had a great veneration, as if they were men who could not readily err; or they have espoused some opinions and been the zealous asserters of them. The pride of their heart,

and the opinion they have of their own wits, doth so inebriate them, that they are ashamed to pass from their espoused principles and practices; that they will not be reputed changeable, they set all their wits and fancies to work to find out defence, which at length so steals into their minds and humours, that at last they make it a matter of conscience to defend both their principles and their practices, that it is with many who call that conscience, which is nothing else but the shadow of an empty name and reputation.

Stubbornness is by some also called conscience; they become stiff and inflexible; no reason can convince them, and when they cannot answer in reason what is said unto them, their last refuge is, that it is against their conscience.

Hypocrisy in some is also sheltered under the cloak of conscience; some are neither sound in their faith as to the matters of religion, nor right in their principles as to the matters of government and civil authority; those persons will not, or dare not, speak forth their dislike, for this were more dangerous, but religion and conscience must be pretended, when under hand they are undoing the interest both of God and Cæsar; all this is well known by the many discoveries divine providence hath made of such persons.

A grand mischief in this matter, which also flows from ignorance and men's meddling, pragmatic humour, is, that men consider not the office, jurisdiction, and limits of their own consciences; they expend their consciences to the meddling with things above them; yea, at all things, they bring all things to their bar of conscience. This silly pragmatic humour is condemned by the Apostle, who bids us do our own business and be quiet. Thess. iv. 7. It is not the business of any man's conscience, private or public, to controvert divine laws, but to know them, receive them, and obey them; neither is it the business of private men to make public laws; that

is committed to princes and magistrates, and such who are in public offices entrusted with the government of the commonwealth; neither is it the office of private men's consciences to search out and know the mysteries of state, the reasons and motives moving them in their actings; it is not fit that these be known to all, they may have very good reason for what they do, and yet very little reason to acquaint every private man with their reasons.

Neither is it the office of every private man's conscience to condemn laws and authority, and set their consciences in opposition to them, when they think they are wrong or burdensome; nor must private consciences think that God hath given them power to oppose, resist, contemn, and pull down the public powers and authorities, which he hath set over them to rule them; this were to destroy government, which is his own ordinance: authority must rule us, we must not rule it.

But to speak positively what the office of conscience is, in reference to God, our superiors, and ourselves.

1st. In reference to the laws and commands of God, the office of the conscience is, without murmuring or contradicting, humbly to believe, receive, and obey them.

2nd. In reference to the laws and authority of men, the conscience hath a power and liberty, by a judgment of discretion, to try all things, whether they be contrary to the law of God or not; if they be, we are not to give active obedience but passive, for it is better to obey God than man; yet in this cause God hath given more power to resist and rise against the powers that are over us. If what they command be not contrary to any express divine precept, then the office of the conscience is to give ready and cheerful obedience, and that even for conscience sake[s], because we are commanded to obey them for the Lord's sake.

[s] Rom. xiii. 5.

In this case, it is not the office and duty of subjects to busy their conscience, and fill their head with scrupulosities, and stand aloof, in case they cannot find out the reason and equity of the law, the motives of the lawgiver. God hath not commanded us to made such search, or to decline obedience because the intentions of the lawgiver, and of other sequels which may follow upon such a law, and our giving obedience to it. To command is the prince's part, and to obey is our part, the event is God s part.

3rd. Our obedience must be rational, and conscientious, and acceptable. We should render a a practical obedience to the just command and rule we are under. The office and duty of our consciences is rationally and prudently to determine our own private actions and affairs, in such motives as neither the law of God or man hath determined us, but left us to our own prudence. A conscience acts conscientiously indeed, when it keeps itself within these due limits, and when it exceeds these it is no more worth to have the name of conscience, but is to receive its own proper titles, which are ignorance, stiffness, willfulness, pride, arrogance, hypocrisy, pragmatical.

4th. A fourth thing that some stubborn and refractory persons would gladly shelter themselves under is, the clemency of the prince whose sovereignty they have despised, and whose clemency they have much abused. Clemency and mercifulness in a prince is a most excellent qualification, it is the brightest diamond in his diadem, it is that which makes him likest his Great Master, the King of Kings, whose mercies are over all his works, and who hath commanded us to be merciful, as our heavenly Father is merciful. Were it not for mercy we should all perish.

But, seeing we are bidden be merciful as our heavenly Father is merciful, it is to be considered, that God as he is merciful, so also he is just and righte-

ous, and will by no means clear the guilty. As a prince is to be merciful, so also he should be just; clemency is not to destroy equity; every virtue must have a right object, and must keep a mediocrity, otherwise it is no true virtue; such who confess and forsake their sin God hath promised them mercy; and when princes find penitence and amendment in their guilty subjects, then they are fit objects for mercy and clemency. If persons be involved and insnared in a turbulent course through ignorance and inadvertency, or by the subtle dealings of others, or through a surprising fear and hazard, excuse not the contrivers of mischief, but blindly led on by others, or out of a blind zeal, supposing they are doing God good service; yet if such, after better information, will retract the evil of their ways, and be gained to better courses, without all doubt these are proper objects for princely clemency.

As on the one hand we have an abhorrence of cruelty, as a thing not only contrary to christian charity but to humanity itself, and we incline a great deal more to mercy and clemency than to rigour and severity, yea, though justly deserved; yet prudence and justice being two cardinal virtues, which must of necessity attend and govern the other virtues, it cannot rationally offend any rational or just man, to take consideration of such persons, to whom favour and clemency is to be shewed.

1st. Though such as forsake and confess their fault are fit objects of mercy, yet it would be considered, how far clemency is to be extended to such as stubbornly persevere in their turbulent courses.

2nd. Though clemency be well bestowed upon such who by it can be gained, but for such who make no better use of clemency, but to lurk under its warm wing, until they have recovered breath and strength, the more powerfully and vigorously to prosecute their sinister and cruel designs, to the ruin of that sovereignty, which hath shewed them cle-

mency; good heed would be taken in dispensing clemency to such.

3rd. Though clemency may be used to such who by infirmity or mistake have been overtaken in a fault, yet for such who, after many favours bestowed, do not only relapse, but from a stated and radical principle do persevere in a course of turbulence to overturn an established government, and hold themselves obliged in conscience so to do; how dangerous clemency thus bestowed may prove, ought to be considered.

[*The rest of this Manuscript is wanting.*]

A FRAGMENT

ON

EZRA IX.

OUR joys and griefs are the pulse of our hearts, and tell the temper of them; earthly joy and sorrow take deep with an earthly heart, but little affect that which is spiritual and heavenly; and in this these prayers and griefs are strong that arise from the spiritual causes, which most of men scarce feel at all; yea, a holy heart stays not in his own interest, in its mourning or rejoicing, hath more even of other men's sins, than commonly they themselves that are guilty: *rivers of waters, &c.* Of this same temper was this holy man. Oh! how would a few, how would one such person in a congregation advance the work of a public fast, more than hundreds of us, and such an one's silence speaks more than all our noises. His sitting astonied till the evening sacrifice; little shallow griefs find the tongue more readily, but the greater are not of so easy vent, but stop a while, though pressing to be out, as a full vessel with a narrow mouth. It was so with Ezra's sorrow for the people's sin, but when it gets out, it springs upward with the greater force, even up to heaven. "I fell on my knees, and spread out my hands to the Lord my God, and said, Oh! my Lord, I am ashamed, our iniquities are increased over our heads; these cover me with shame, and I blush to lift up my face to those heavens whither our iniquities are gone up before; when I would look to thee, I spy our horrible transgressions got thither

first, and standing before thee and accusing us." Transgression grown up to heaven; it hath had a long time to grow in, and all that time hath been incessantly growing, and therefore grown so high; since the days of our fathers we have been in this trespass; generations pass, but yet your sins abide, when the succeeding generation follows on in it, the former sins are reserved, and the latter added to them, and so they are kept alive, then they grow, this fills up the measure and ripens a people for judgment, that is filling and growing all the while suitable to the sin, till it be poured out, hence public calamities and long lasting judgments on people.

Now these two things aggravate great judgments inflicted, and great deliverances granted, yet after both, &c. after all this, Is not this just our case? have we not been sharply scourged? (though indeed far less than our iniquities) and have we not been seasonably and wonderfully delivered in our extremities? And yet have we not again broken his commandments? and do we not still generally and grossly continue so doing? Oh! what shall we say to our God, we cannot stand before him because of this, let us therefore fall down before him and confess and supplicate, and there is yet hope that he will be gracious.

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